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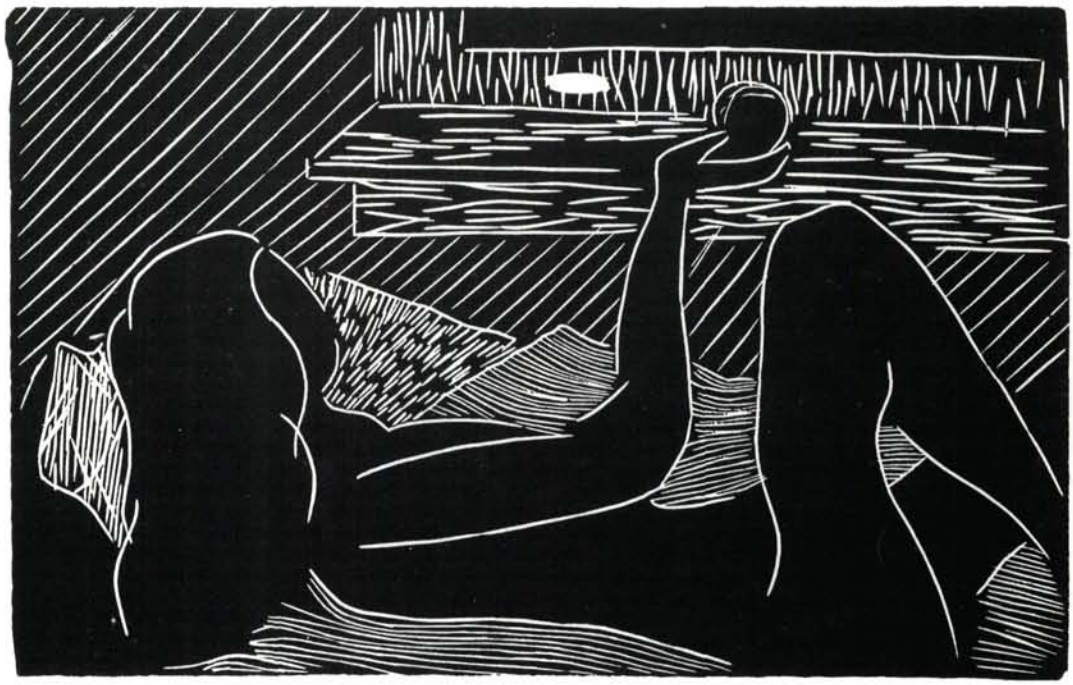

"Burying the Babies"

Cynthia Macdonald's New Long Poem

The Writers' Workshop

Iowa's—Certainly First, Probably Best

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AN OPEN LETTER TO CREATIVE WRITING INSTRUCTORS:

Malcolm Cowley once commented on the academic atmosphere that pushed the "lost generation" into self-imposed exile:

> Our studies were useless or misdirected, especially our studies in English Literature: the authors we were forced to read, and Shakespeare most of all, were unpleasant to our palate; they had the taste of chlorinated water. (Pg. 18)
>
> There seemed to be no writer with our own background. There was no one who spoke directly to our youth, no one for us to follow with a single heart, no one, even, against whom we could intelligently and fruitfully rebel. (Pg. 20)
>
> —*Exile's Return*, Viking Press, Copyright 1934, 1962 by Malcolm Cowley

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Vol. 262/No. 2/Summer 1977

The North American Review

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Editor	ROBLEY WILSON, JR.
Poetry	PETER COOLEY
Environment	JOSEPH W. MEEKER
Contributing Editors	ROY BEHRENS, RICHARD BROOK, LEO J. HERTZEL, KENNETH LASH, JOHN LINDBERG, BARRY LOPEZ, STEPHEN MINOT, LAWRENCE STURHAHN
Business Manager	CHARLOTTE L. WILSON

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Don Daso

A Loyal American Confesses

We come into the world with a cry. We cannot say what it is a cry of—rage, pain, fear? We concern ourselves instead with the voyage we make between that cry and our final word.

At the age of 22, I wrote that, and began notes for much of what follows. I wrote partly in rage, in pain, and with mild fear for my life. I wrote because that was something I knew how to do, something I could do, and because the process allowed me to explain, to define myself, let me move beyond the rage and fear.

It was not a unique time for anything in America. People were confused and angered and calling everything unique, and all this pressure convinced me everything was normal. The war, that unpopular game in Southeast Asia, went on. We all watched the electronic coverage nightly—the destruction in the jungle around the globe, and demonstrations downtown. Perhaps some of us felt the confusion of time in the process: on this free-spinning ball of earth, everything happens all at once.

Yet, our life experience is so much slower. Biologists, geologists, writers, everybody's telling us about time, of our body's clock, the planet's clock, the acline-regulated clock telling us when we're late for work. The television networks think of time as duration—how long will we watch *this*, how much of *that*. They seem close to the traveling we make between our first and final cry. They seem close not in a sense of measuring time (clocks again!), but, in acknowledging that we all experience time as moving, relentlessly running forward. What better signals us that day has ended, night begun, than our evening news with Cronkite, Reasoner, *et al*? Or that night ends with the 11 o'clock news, and something strange, a time for somnambulists, dreams and memories, begins with Johnny Carson. Time slows after 11:00 at night; we dream then, resting for tomorrow's work; we dredge up our old, old movies. We make babies, drop off to sleep, while our streets are being cleaned, our bread baked, milk delivered, our cars put together.

At 22, I would sometimes come awake in the night, listening, all senses keened to some presence, some danger, lurking about the house. I would often slide from bed, being careful not to wake my young wife, and pad silently about our rooms. Summer nights, I would stand quietly on our patio, looking across toward the great Sangre de Cristo Mountains, straining to hear some sound beneath the rush of traffic on nearby Route 66. I would stand there, naked, alert and ready to face danger, should it choose to come forth and challenge me. Finally, I would go back to bed, satisfied with the night. What bothered me then, I suppose, was this durational quality of life—my life was rolling toward the war. I expected some Asian foe, or maybe Uncle Sam himself (his finger pointing, a formidable weapon), to come striding across the New Mexico desert after me. And I had very little, in the way of weapons, to face either. I could have thrown some Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Malcolm Lowry, some Conrad Aiken, in their faces. I could have fought them, then, perhaps wrestling them to the ground, but I would not have known what to do with them. None of us really knows how to react to our fears. We have Hemingway's old "grace under pressure" strategy, but I have always felt I could better apply that idea to a charging, wounded animal, or to personal, physical pain, than to a great and vainglorious historical event such as war. Few of us really know about war, since it is neither idea or event alone, except for the claims of historians in history books, which are little durational episodes strung together to make sense to other historians. So much of their history makes so little sense because we cannot identify day from night, in a figurative sense. All of *this* happened, the historians tell us, and then *this* happened next, so much cause and effect. But everyday tells us nothing is so smooth; we seek the bumps and grinds, the false starts, the stumbles, in the history presented us. We sometimes wander in the night, looking for it.

Much of what bothered me those nights was history, a history of my own construction. I had fragments of it written down, told and re-told portions of it to friends in conversation, and kept some pieces hidden in dreams, some to be stories for my own children. The whole episodic nature of life seemed too vital to allow anything like war and military service to mar its beauty. But when I was 20, the surface of my life was broken by such a Federal stone. I think, now, eight long years later, that perhaps I can describe what bothered me then, what I learned then, what happened. The point of all this, of course, is simply to remember—to remember what it was like to be me. However much I mean to speak to larger issues—say, history, or politics—I am still trying to deal with the mysterious figure behind the "I" of these words. Like that young man standing on a darkened patio, looking for an unknown force, I am looking for the force within these sentences, some sense of what I was when I wrote them down, in the past which coils up behind me.

* * *

When I appeared for my Armed Forces physical exam, I had several things to consider: things which made me eager to enlist, as well as to be a pacifistic innocent bystander. No one in my family had ever avoided military service. Indeed, all of my male relatives were veterans. My father, a polio victim, spent most of World War II trying to join up. His rejection still bothers him, although he hasn't spoken of it to me for years. People always told me of the great and varied educational values I might find in the service, knowing school was important to me. My favorite high school teacher had been a little Irish Marine vet, with a tattoo that was somewhat controversial in my rural school district. He told me I should be a writer. To please him, I wrote stories, and to show everyone else his praise of my work didn't go to my head, I managed to draw

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Marine Corps memories out of him during classtime. But just as fish die in overcrowded ponds from lack of oxygen, I was still afraid of joining anything that reduced you to a series of numbers and required you to wear a uniform. I'd already had too much of digging holes and then filling them back up. I stood around the tiny folded-out cardtables with sugar doughnuts on them, served us by smiling gray-haired ladies, watching everyone else and worrying about those kinds of things, at 6:00 in the morning on the day of the exam.

No one else seemed worried at all. People were shouting, throwing the orange juice (which came with the doughnuts), talking about what they were going to do with their new-found freedom. One kid was planning to join the Navy, hoping to track down this whore around Great Lakes Naval Training Center, for she'd shown his older brother some fantastic times. I began to realize that this going away would probably be all the travel many of them would ever experience. No one mentioned the war. I wish now I knew the statistics of how many went where, and how many returned. Although I never knew any of them personally, I am certain some of them are dead, and I wish I had spoken to them that day, albeit briefly, and expressed hope for their future. But I did not think of this then, as I stood alone, trying to eat my doughnut, and I did not think of it on the two hour bus ride to Cleveland (then the second largest processing station, I believe). The trip was an escape, with lots of yelling out the windows, whistling at women on their way to work, and raising middle fingers to any signs of rebuke. Finally, near the Federal Building, things quieted down, but only for a moment. Once outside, the antics began again. We filed into a large room, amid stories and laughter. We filled out forms, took a series of tests, and then were lectured to, very briefly, on the glories of military service. Then we were told to undress, down to shorts and shoes, were given little paper sacks to hold all our valuables, and began following painted arrows on the floor.

* * *

The examination process itself was mass obscenity. We were already "in service" by virtue of being there. And people no older than any of us delighted in ordering us about, mildly threatening those who hesitated, delivering staccato commands, then pushing us on to others, finally dropping us with the doctors themselves. Although I have never been, in any serious sense, sick or ill for any length of time, and therefore fortunate to have a hero to model myself on, I have always entertained fantasies of being a doctor more than anything else, save for one solid year of wanting to become a fighter pilot. Something about knowing what to do, and taking care of people, curing them, has always seemed to me religiously important and valuable. I never went beyond this fantasy, but images from it occur whenever I am faced with the aura of the medical world: the antiseptic aroma of anesthesia wearing off, bandages, clean and cool wards of people bustling about, communicating in heavily Latinate dialogues. All of that was missing from my perception as I waited for a small pockmark-faced man to examine me. He was wearing khakis, a Captain's bars, and a dirty-white doctor's coat. He was also wearing rubber gloves. Thirty of us stood in little circles, waiting for him to move down the row, examining each man in turn. The gloves, I realized, were to keep him clean. The last man in our row could consider himself mauled by all 29 of us. He stopped in front of me, looked through my file, asked a few questions about my broken bones from childhood, my flat feet, my allergies, told his assistants what to write down, calling them each Lieutenant, then rolled my penis aside, stabbing me quickly with an expert finger, and told me to turn my head, cover my mouth, and cough. I did, and did again. Moments later, the embarrassments were over; the remaining tests were quick, routine. I spoke with a psychiatrist, and a urine-examiner—because they were willing to talk—but no one else. The only sounds were steps, as hundreds marched around those rooms, those sharp commands, the rustling of thousands of forms, and the droning of the elevators, bringing more bodies to be examined. The tests over, we waited in a large room for the rest of our group to finish, so we could go to lunch together. In the afternoon, there were more tests, "mental proficiency" exams, and forms to fill out about "subversive organizations." Finally, near the end of the day, we boarded our bus again. We passed through Cleveland once more, headed south. And it seemed different, in the late afternoon light. I rode along with little sense of motion. From somewhere, someone produced a box of Cracker Jacks, and it was thrown about the bus. I watched the driver's eyes in the mirror, taking us all in. Caramel-coated popcorn lay on my sleeve, and no matter how hard I tried to convince myself that everything was all right—normal, even—I knew I could not live and work normally among men or boys like those yelling and screaming beside me. I'd break first. Depression and fear set in, for I had passed all the day's exams. My identity seemed lost, perhaps tossed about with the candy. I wondered if it was not my duty simply to function, to listen, to obey, to not rock the boat, to do what was right.

As the bus came closer and closer to my home, I became convinced that what I felt was important. I *should* be scared to death, I told myself. And I knew I wasn't afraid of any one thing, but of a process, a process of change designed to destroy one's perception of time. I knew that as I moved through the night, my past and my future—a vector of myself—were part of me, and would always be so. Even if I did not know my direction, the force would continue, and this force would lead me to question and confusion, and possibly even to fear. I knew the questioning was my right to life; hadn't literature been telling me that for years? So I got down from the bus with my jaw firmly set, the only one not smiling. The only one who in two short years would stand before the Federal green doors once again, more certain of beliefs than I had thought possible, ready to enter and proclaim a defiance and protest to all that had been presented to me as a result of the long bus ride that day, the only one of the group to oppose the mass obscenity.

* * *

The protest spoken of here resulted in my classification as a conscientious objector, and two years of hospital duty—called "alternative service." Procedures and participation were costly, time-consuming, even degrading occasionally, but I weathered them. In that hospital, my medical perceptions were restored, shattered and restored again, countless times. Other perceptions, about time, confusion, love, a sense of history, have also been altered; I find something new to add or subtract almost daily. I do not have as much rage now, but pain and fears confuse me still. Writing remains something I can do—I continue to believe in myself and in words—as I voyage between my first cry and some final word. —*Don Daso*

KENNETH LASH is in England for a brief visit. When he returns, so will his regular column—as poisonous as ever, but with the barest trace of a British accent.

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DICK ALLEN

AT DUSK, ALONG THE INTERSTATE

The biggest words in sight
are advertising
cigarettes.
I once knew a linotypist
in love with cirrus clouds
for their forming of letters.
One afternoon,
drinking on his backyard patio,
we found the whole Greek alphabet
and had started on the Roman, reaching
E before the sun went down
into the quiet meadows of Connecticut.
I remember, at the height
of the war in Korea
a *Plain-Dealer* picture of Jesus
shaped by clouds above a battlefield
(it later turned out
the picture was faked)
and the huge dove-like bird
I saw for an hour, in clouds
over the Keys
as I drove toward Hemingway's house
seeking my future.
But now it is lights
pocketed in
mountain villages:
if only I could blur my eyes enough,
these roads wouldn't curve,
these lights would form words.

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INSIDE THE IOWA WRITERS' WORKSHOP

Interviews with three of its teachers

by Steve Wilbers

Donald Justice:

DONALD JUSTICE has been both student and teacher in the Workshop, and is on the permanent poetry staff at Iowa—though he has, like his colleague Marvin Bell, been on leave this year. He is probably the most respected teacher of poetry around, and he has a deserved reputation as a craftsman. His best-known books of poems are Departures *and* The Summer Anniversaries. *His teaching experience also includes stints in California and upstate New York.*

WILBERS: How does one go about teaching creative writing?

JUSTICE: Yeah, well, that's an old question and one of the reasons I guess it has persisted is it's hard to answer. First of all, there are two kinds of teaching: a private, personal kind of teaching, a one-to-one relation with each of the students, which can usually be carried out in private conference; and then—since universities are where writing is generally approached nowadays in America, whether taught or not—there are usually class meetings, too, as a necessary corollary to functioning as part of the university curriculum.

As for methods, if there are methods, they differ with the level of sophistication and experience of the people that you're associated with as teacher to student. If the students are not very advanced, are not very sophisticated and experienced in writing, you can begin more or less at the beginning by having them read, for instance, things that you think are good. Instruction by models is a very useful means of instructing a person in anything, I believe.

Then there is instruction by practice—something that is always done in good writing-groups. That is, you have the students write a piece without any particular expectation that it will be good, but with the expectation that the pieces will have in them things you can respond to and comment on and criticize. So, just as with most attempts at teaching anything, you might try to expose the near beginner to models and try to get him to practice in order to develop his own skills. Then there can begin to be a conversation between you and the student about writing. Then his own work becomes, perhaps, a model—at least an example—and you can work off that, as a teacher.

WILBERS: Are there some authors that tend to be used frequently as models?

JUSTICE: I'm sure there are. But also, I feel pretty sure that they vary from year to year and from group to group and from person to person. For instance there are certain writers I like better than others—Wallace Stevens, for example. But I might never mention Stevens to a student if Stevens seemed so alien in spirit to what he was trying to do that it would be pointless to encourage him to study that particular master. It is my belief that exact prescription is a mistake in advance of the specific case. In teaching writing, as I'm sure you know, what I prefer is dealing with a specific case—not only a specific student but a specific piece of writing. You know, I feel I can talk best about a specific case rather than saying, as I heard someone say recently in a writing class, "Begin your lines with a capital letter." I don't think there are rules like that—one way or the other. It seems to me that the only way of dealing with something like that, if it matters at all, is to say that the lines of a poem may begin *with* a capital letter or *without* a capital letter.

WILBERS: You seem hesitant to make the claim that creative writing can in fact be taught.

JUSTICE: Yes. Well, "teach" is perhaps too direct and uncomplicated a verb for what may happen. What I want to suggest is that it would be very hard to prescribe a set of rules by which writing can be accomplished by writers, or by which the teaching of writing can be accomplished by teachers of writing. You work privately with a person as much as you can, and you respond to his work as honestly as you can and as profitably for both of you as you can, without having in mind certain dogmas, certain prescriptions, and certain rules. You learn then from your best students the things you hadn't imagined beforehand, so that with the very best students the teaching of writing also becomes the learning of writing. That's one of the reasons, by the way, that it *can* be interesting to teach over many years. You meet interesting people while teaching.

WILBERS: Do you impose deadlines on your students? Are they expected to produce a certain quantity of writing in a given semester?

JUSTICE: They are expected to, but it's not spelled out. That is, at the beginning of the semester I do not announce, "You must write 24 poems of 200 lines for each three hours of credit that you're enrolled for." That seems alien to the nature of writing in the world outside the academy, except in the case of what I call hack writing. But we are assuming that the writing that is being taught in the Workshop—this year at Iowa, anyway—is writing for which the primary purpose is not the turning of a pretty penny. In other words, the emphasis is not on that practical end of it, like "Write so much within such and such an amount of time." It's expected that if you're a professional or semi-professional writer, or wish to be, you will write, if not daily, at least weekly as part of the conduct of your life. And if you do this in a normal, healthy, functioning way as a writer, you'll have enough at the end of a term, say, to have made your being around worthwhile.

Now if that doesn't happen, as it sometimes doesn't,

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then the person is usually discouraged with himself. He sees that he is not going to manage to do what is expected. So not very often do we have to be the ones to point out—"Well you didn't write enough last semester. Therefore, we're going to give you an F." That almost never happens. And anyway the pace of writing varies from person to person. I've had some extremely prolific students who could write ten poems a week, week after week, poems worth talking about, and others who would write maybe three or four poems worth talking about over a period of six months. I'm happy to deal with both kinds. But when you just see the name on a class list before you know the work, you have no way of knowing what the pace of that student is. You feel it out; you have to adjust your expectations to what that person is capable of.

WILBERS: Have you discovered any effective ways of helping someone with "writer's block"?

JUSTICE: Well, I have made suggestions, but I don't know if there's ever a simple cure. One practical suggestion that I do make is, if the person knows a foreign language, to do some translations. It's a way you practice your craft or art without having to be so personally involved that you get all screwed up with whatever neuroses are bothering you at the time. I really can't say that I know the answer, but that's a prescription I offer myself sometimes and it works for me and might work for someone else. At least translations do no harm—except maybe to the writer being translated. I have made other suggestions too, such as, "Stop worrying about it and do something else. Take piano lessons. Play tennis."

WILBERS; You first came to this university as a student in February of 1952.

JUSTICE: Right.

WILBERS: And unlike most Workshop students (who enroll in the Master of Fine Arts program) you took the option of going for the Ph.D. and submitted a collection of poems as your dissertation. Considering the effort involved in taking conventional courses in literature and preparing for comprehensive examinations, do you feel there is a natural incompatibility between academic and creative work?

JUSTICE: Yes, in that doing the one took time away from thinking about or actually doing the other. The writer generally prefers by temperament to be writing rather than doing scholarship. So that's the time he's likely to regret, the time spent doing more scholarship than he would otherwise have done. It worked both ways though—trying to write a poem took time away from scholarship. Not that I minded that.

So yes, there is a conflict—a very important one when you consider how eager a writer is to get going on all the fresh ideas flooding through his head when he's starting out. But I consider it to be a conflict more of time than of intellectual incompatibility. It seems to me that writing and scholarship pursue roughly parallel courses; they're not in any essential psychological or aesthetic conflict. In other words, a person should be capable of being contented while trying both, unless he has some sort of temperamental, neurotic block.

WILBERS: What kind of curriculum does the Writers' Workshop offer? For example, is there a sequence in courses?

JUSTICE: No, there isn't any course sequence. The heart of the Workshop program is the workshop itself, which is the group of, oh, 12 to 15 people writing, say, poetry, who meet every Monday afternoon for a couple of hours to talk about the work they've done that week and to try to say something intelligent or perceptive to help the person who wrote it. The work is mimeographed in advance so that everyone can have read it beforehand. So the Workshop is practical in the sense that what we feel we should be interested in is the production of poetry or fiction instead of literary criticism.

Then there are adjunct courses, which are oriented to history or criticism or reading. These courses are meant to broaden our curriculum in the sense that good writing is, as I believe, an accompaniment to reading. As for students in the Workshop, some have read a great deal and some have read a surprisingly small amount when they get here, but they almost always become readers before they leave.

WILBERS: How does the Iowa Writers' Workshop compare with programs elsewhere?

JUSTICE: Of the programs that I'm acquainted with, it is probably to some degree a model, at least historically. Most of the writing programs in colleges resemble the Iowa program and in most cases those programs were departures from the Iowa example. The Iowa program was perhaps different from what it is now, at the time that people devised other programs. For instance, the program at the University of Arkansas, which is in part modeled on the Iowa M.F.A. program, really is a great deal stricter and more academic than the Iowa Program is now—much more like the Iowa program was fifteen years ago.

WILBERS: After a number of years of teaching in the Workshop here, you left in 1966 and returned in the fall of 1971. Have you noticed any fundamental changes in the program here since your return six years ago?

JUSTICE: Yes, I have. It's less structured. There're fewer requirements. For example, it used to be that for an M.F.A. a student was required to take courses, a core of courses, in some other art. If he could get in such courses, then it was strongly recommended that he take courses in the literature of a foreign language from which he might be translating, or something along those lines—maybe a course in art history. Now that may be suggested privately to a student, but it is no longer a requirement of the program. In other words, the sense of the M.F.A. as a program devised to prepare someone for a life in the arts and culture of his time is gone; that's left up to the student to manage independently now. This kind of change, by the way, has been accompanied by similar changes, I think, in other departments in other degree programs.

WILBERS: What do you foresee in the future? Do you expect programs to continue to loosen up in this way?

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JUSTICE: No, I don't. I think that if anything they may tighten up. But I may be speaking out of personal desire rather than with a prophetic eye.

WILBERS: How about the community of Iowa City? Is it a good place for a writer to work?

JUSTICE: Well, to me one of the good things about Iowa City and the University and the Workshop was that from the very start there did seem to be some connection among those three things: the Workshop, the University, and the town. You could feel that there was a community here in which writers were factors, writers were involved, instead of being—as often is the case not only in towns but in universities themselves—rather isolated, alien from the spirit of place. Here that feeling is far less marked. At least from my point of view, you can feel like you're a member of the community, if you like—but you don't have to. That's a very pleasing feeling to me.

It's also, I believe, not so pleasing to writers of other temperaments. They just don't much like the community. I suppose such writers prefer to feel isolated. I feel like that sometimes myself, but for me it was a great pleasure to find a community that involved writers. And the Workshop is historically in the center of that, as far as I'm concerned.

I should add: this would not be to suggest that this "community"—the Workshop—consists of a group of homogeneous people with homogenized ideas about writing, say, or, indeed, about how to go about writing. There is a good deal of sharp conflict both aesthetically and personally. And I don't object to that. In fact, I'm glad it's that way.

Marvin Bell:

MARVIN BELL has been out of the Workshop this year on a Guggenheim Fellowship, but returns to his teaching duties this summer. Over the years his avocations have included music and photography, but since the publication eleven years ago of his first book of poems, he has been increasingly devoted to poetry—and increasingly accomplished as a poet. His newest book is Stars Which See, Stars Which Do Not See. *For five years he was the NAR's poetry editor.*

WILBERS: What was it like to be a student in the Iowa Writers' Workshop when you first came here in 1961?

BELL: Well, when I came here, I was sort of a graduate student bum. I had been in Syracuse and Rochester and Chicago for a while and at that time it was really more disreputable, I think, to enroll in a writing program or to band together with other writers in a community. There weren't writing programs around, really—I'm not sure there were *any* others. Perhaps there were, but certainly very few. So those of us who came here were a mite disreputable academically, I think, and a little older than many of the students are now. We hadn't come right out of our undergraduate years for the most part. Most of us had been doing other things for at least two or three years.

Also, the Workshop was much smaller then. Now, we get about three hundred applications for every fall, just in the poetry workshop, and we get other applications in the summer or in the first semester asking for admission to the second semester, and we can only accept about one out of ten. So today, I myself would never get into the Workshop on the basis of the manuscript I submitted. Not in a million years would I get into the Workshop now. My manuscript would be rejected summarily—by *me*. *I* would reject it summarily. There was just no way to know that there was any talent involved. I don't know; maybe I would have sneaked by on the basis of the amount of writing and editing and publishing I had already done by then. But the work was obscure and difficult and experimental in superficial ways, I think. That manuscript would probably be set aside pretty quickly now. The people who apply now are just much, much better, which makes it really difficult to figure out who's going to be really good ten years later, because they're all pretty good now. It's very hard to make the judgments and we never feel sure of ourselves once we do.

WILBERS: I suppose that a change like that is inevitable in a successful program, but I wonder if you feel that, as a result of these tougher standards, the Workshop is in some ways letting down young writers.

BELL: How do you mean?

WILBERS: Well, by its not being able to acknowledge talent or to work with talent at an earlier point in a writer's development.

BELL: Well, I don't want to exaggerate the unsureness with which we make our decisions. There's a little bit of false modesty in that, I guess. I think the procedures we use and the people we use pretty much ensure that we do take the very best people. The real problem is choosing the last few people who get in, because there are so many manuscripts that are like so many others and even the best manuscripts often contain very bad poems. Should you count that against them or not? I think not—just ignore them. Or someone will send a manuscript that's really very bad but will contain one or two poems that are better than anyone else's. Or sometimes you get a manuscript from some little school in the South, say, and you know that the poet has never met a writer in his or her life and has probably never read any contemporary poetry, yet the manuscript shows a wonderful imagination. I would be inclined to say, "Let's take a chance." But you can be wrong.

I think we *do* make good choices and I base that on seeing the procedures work and knowing how they work. I also base it on the fact that people we accept tend to be

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ABOVE: A photo taken in May, 1977, in the fiction seminar led by Frederick Busch. Class members—named here as a hedge against anonymity in the future—are, left to right, Jayne Anne Phillips, Fred Ayerhoff, Gordon Mennenga, Irene Wanner, and Mary Stearns. INSET: The same class from a different angle. Left to right: Robin Green, Bruce Tucker, Charles Morgan.

These three interviews with teaching staff members of the Iowa Writers' Workshop were conducted by Steve Wilbers, and are a part of a history of the Workshop which eventually will constitute his thesis at the University. Justice, Bell, Bourjaily and Jack Leggett are all permanent staff in the Workshop; their work is shared by other writers who serve on the Workshop staff for varying periods of time—some as briefly as one semester, others for a year or more. This year, for example, fiction sections have also been taught by Frederick Busch (Domestic Particulars) *Rosalyn Drexler, and Robert Anderson. Poetry teachers have been Louise Glück* (The House on Marshland) and William Matthews (Sleek for the Long Flight), *Jon Anderson* (In Sepia) *and Richard Murphy* (High Island). *Leggett is Director of the Workshop; he is the program's fourth director, in a line which began in 1936 with Wilbur Schramm. Paul Engle became the Workshop's best-known director in 1941, and held that post for 25 years—until his founding of the International program, which gathered writers to Iowa City from abroad. George Starbuck followed Engle, but after several years moved on to Boston University. Leggett is himself a fiction writer* (Wilder Stone) *and biographer* (Ross & Tom), *and teaches a fiction section in the Workshop.*

Over the years since the Program in Creative Writing—the "official" title of the Writers' Workshop—began, Iowa City has become a kind of literary crossroads of America; the number of well-known authors who give readings there, who teach there on a visiting basis, who are encouraged to learn their profession there, is staggering, and the influence of the Workshop on other creative writing programs is incalculable. The reputation of the Workshop has had its impact on the state of Iowa as a whole; Easterners and Westerners who expect it to be a cultural pigpen, a literary soybean field, are chagrined by Iowa's worldliness. As Kurt Vonnegut has put it: "No other state is as kind to writers, and as intelligent to writers, as Iowa is."

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accepted elsewhere and offered aid elsewhere. Other people's judgments tend to agree with ours, though not completely. I think we tend to take a wider range than most workshops. I think we deliberately look for people who are different. One of the common remarks on the rating sheets that are attached to the manuscripts will be something like, "This person really writes differently from other people and would be good to have here."

WILBERS: In what other ways has the Workshop changed in the last fifteen years?

BELL: Well, there seem to be fewer students who have really individual voices in their poetry, but I'm not sure that's bad. When I first say it, it sounds terrible. But I'm not sure it's bad because what's happening is that a search for eccentricity has changed into a communal empathy of style or something—I don't know quite how to say this. But I think that years ago individual poets were much more interested in individual styles which lent themselves to eccentricity and strain, and that poets now are much more interested in other things which don't create these eccentric styles. And I think that's probably good.

The thing that strikes me is that we were all terribly clever when I was a student in the Workshop. We were terribly clever in that witty fifties way. This was already in the beginning of the sixties but it was still the era of fifties poetry, which was our model. That was the style of the times and the idea was to prove that you could do it even better than others. So we did joke a lot and a lot of our poems were games of one sort or another. Sometimes the poems that came out were very good and other times they came out merely clever. And I think now you find a great deal less cleverness among students. Sometimes one wishes they *could* be clever. But they're not. Where we erred on the side of cleverness, they err on the side of earnestness. But these things go back and forth.

WILBERS: What do you think caused the change?

BELL: Country's growing up a little. I think a lot of it has to do with the country. That sounds like an awfully big, pompous thing to say but I guess I believe that. You know, we thought we could win the Vietnam War with technique, right? With better technique and better bombs and better boots, better shoes, better rifles. And I think American poets sort of absorbed that feeling without ever agreeing with it necessarily or even knowing that they had absorbed it, but they thought they could sort of invent new ways to do things. And many of the great poets have, you see. If you read the great mommies and daddies of modern poetry—Eliot and Stevens, Whitman, and Dickinson, and Yeats, and Pound, and Thomas, and Crane, and Frost, and Cummings, and Williams and whoever else—Marianne Moore—you see that they *did,* among other things, have very individual styles. So there was a temptation to think of individual styles as one of the many requirements for being a great poet, you see.

WILBERS: The question always arises as to whether creative writing can be taught. How do you think a young writer benefits most from the Iowa program?

BELL: Well, that's a good question, of course, and one that really can't be answered for all time. You know, I'm not sure mathematics can be taught or that a lot of things can be taught. On the other hand, you can teach a kind of professionalism in the good sense: being able to think seriously about one's art, rather than being a quivering mass of talent or whatever. The best thing we do, I think, is to create an atmosphere of friendliness and respect for the art. That doesn't always work for every person at every time. There're people who feel so paranoid about being here that they feel it's a really unfriendly place. Some people benefit by feeling that they're fighting everyone. They fight the Workshop all the way. They go home every single night saying, "Those sons of bitches don't understand me and don't appreciate me," and they grow *that* way. Other people don't benefit at all and just turn around and leave. But most people, I think, would agree that it's pretty much a friendly place, that people respect people for being writers or at least don't hold it against them.

So we try to create an atmosphere in which people can talk to one another about their work and about their reading and criticize one another's work, criticize one another, support one another, and learn from one another. Then of course there's a certain amount of this that is official, in a sense—that is when we get together in the classes and discuss students' poems, when students ask for conferences with the teachers and sit alone with them and discuss poems with them. And I think that you try this or that or read this or that. To a great extent, learning to write is done by learning to read, by reading good work. One of the things we always try to do is to say to people, "Have you read such and such? I think you would enjoy such and such."

But even though you can encourage people—you can show them things to read that they wouldn't have thought of—you can't teach talent. I don't think anyone ever claimed that he or she could teach talent. And you can't teach commitment. Just can't. Pound said that more poems were ruined by failure of character than by failure of talent or intelligence or something like that. And it's true, it takes a special kind of character to go on doing something, whether it's writing poetry or growing hybrid roses, for twenty or thirty years. The more I go on teaching poetry writing, even to specially interesting and talented students like those that show up here in the Workshop, the more I think that to some extent writing good poetry is a matter of genius. I don't mean the kind of genius that shows up on I.Q. tests necessarily, but some kind of genius for poetry. And you certainly can't teach that. How much of it comes out of instruction, how much of it comes out of character, how much of it comes out of will, I'm not sure, but I think some of it must.

So I try to tell the students once in a while, "You know, there aren't any extra points in life for writing poetry." If they find that they want to do something else, they should do it without feeling guilty. I mean, people talk about other people as if they were failures because they gave up writing, or they gave up being artists. I don't think fishermen talk about other fishermen as failures because they decide to go into business instead. It's a very strange thing. Many artists and writers and intellectuals and academics really think that people who don't pursue these fields that test talent or test

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ABOVE: A photo of some historical interest, taken circa 1960 inside the Quonset hut which housed the Workshop at the time. In the foreground is Paul Engle, conducting a poetry seminar; others identifiable in the picture are Donald Justice (to the right of Engle) and, beginning third from the left, Nicholas Crome, Robert Mezey, Kim Merker, and Henri Coulette. The other three class members no one in the present Workshop generation recognizes.

the mind are failures somehow or that something went wrong in their lives. I don't believe that and I don't feel that it's necessary to fill people with guilt for giving up writing. Many of them do give up writing. How they feel twenty years later, I don't know, but I hope they don't feel bad about it.

WILBERS: What about the community of Iowa City? Is it a good place for a writer to live?

BELL: Yes, it's a great place to work—I've heard that said a hundred if not a thousand times. And people do find it a good place to live. But the main thing, I think, is that when you have a big community of writers like this set in a little midwestern town it's very difficult to go on pretending that you're terribly special or visionary. Everybody knows you struck out in the softball game yesterday and you fell down the stairs Friday and that your child was yelling during the movie. I mean, everybody *knows* and so you gradually stop pretending you're just a great artist of some kind. That's a real advantage, I think. The ego of young writers gets in the way of perception. There's just *so much* ego and personality in the way of perception, and anything that can counteract that is good. I think just the midwest setting and the fact that there are so many writers around here does counteract that, and I think that's healthy.

Of course, it's a good place to play, too. Iowa City has had some great bars, like Kenney's and Donnelly's where the writers drank. Donnelly's had the distinction of once having had Dylan Thomas drink in the rear booth, and I think there was some bidding for the booth when Donnelly's was being demolished for urban renewal. Kenney's was even more so a writers' bar, a writers' and artists' bar. Irene Kenney, who ran it most of those years, tended to hire art students and poets to be waitresses there and you could go down there about ten o'clock at night and just see everybody. *Everybody* would be there.

Back then, the bars would close at eleven. Well, the funny thing about that is that in a way it was good, because what would happen is that at about ten-thirty at night the word would go around as to where the party was going to be and everybody would go get their six-packs and head for the party. And if nobody had volunteered to have the party, we would just pick somebody out in the back of the room and spread the word the party was at his place and by the time he heard it, it was too late to do anything about it, you know. So we had a party every night—we had a party *every single night!* It was wonderful! But now of course the bars stay open much later and even the people who go to the bars seem too tired to think of a party afterward.

Then, there's a problem when people leave Iowa City. Every fall my phone starts to ring, even more than it does normally, and they're people who have left the Workshop in the last two or three years. They're getting nostalgic and lonely. It's registration time and they call up for a little injection of enthusiasm. It's really a problem, I think. They go out from here and, if they do manage to find a job teaching, they go to Ferris State College in Big Rapids, Michigan, or somesuch—to use an example from the past—and they feel isolated and they feel unappreciated, if not hated. They no longer know anyone to show their poems to and they're used to being able to show their poems to someone. So another thing I try to tell the students—I don't know if it makes any sense to them—is to not give up doing the things they normally do when they come here. If you're a gardener or if you collect stamps or if you grow roses or if you play basketball, keep doing it. Go out there in the community and do it. Because if you cut everything else out, then two years later, or whenever, you're thrown back on your own.

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WILBERS: Have writing programs like the Iowa Writers' Workshop influenced the course of American letters?

BELL: Not much. No, I don't think the Iowa Workshop has influenced the course of literature. I do think though that it has helped people to go on writing and not just the people who came here. Paul Engle's work in establishing a writers' workshop has helped others too. He sort of just made it happen so nobody could kick it out. I don't think anybody ever told him he could have a workshop; he just went and did it and it grew and nobody knew how to stop it. Then they found out it was pretty nice to have around so they let it happen, and the next thing you knew writing programs were growing up all over the place.

On the other hand, you couldn't keep them from existing. It would be sort of like trying to keep a bunch of kids who have a bat and a ball from going out and playing. I mean, sooner or later they will. Sooner or later poets will get together and find a way to talk to each other. Why shouldn't they? It's fun and it might even be useful.

I once interviewed John Logan years ago about these sorts of things and I remember asking him about groups and workshops and what-have-you and he said then that he knew of no good poet who hadn't at one time or another been a member of some kind of group. Now it might have been the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa or it might have been a group of writers that met in the cafés of Paris. Or, you know, it might have been a group that called itself the "poetry seminar" as we did then, and met in the Midwest Clipping Association offices in Chicago, but whatever it was, most writers need some kind of support and friendship at some point, I think. It's very difficult to go it alone.

I must say though that I personally think most writing programs stink. I really believe that. I think a lot depends on the faculty. And I don't think most writing programs have very good faculty. So I think a lot of them are lousy. Many of them have faculty members who feel too good about teaching writing, who feel that it's a credit to themselves, which is, I think, a bad way to feel. I think there are about one and a half or two good ones in the country. But—

WILBERS: Which ones do you think—

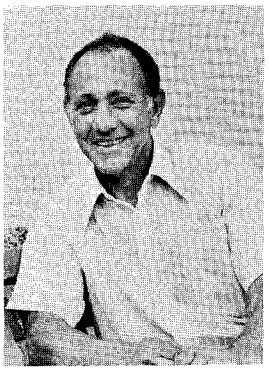
BELL: Yeah, that's tough. I'm not sure. And I would hesitate to say because the faculties change all the time, so I'm not sure.

WILBERS: How does the Iowa program compare generally to these other writing programs?

BELL: Well, I'll anger friends of mine who are in other programs by saying this, but I think the Iowa program is so far out front that no other can touch it. Most people who want to be in a writing program apply here, whether they apply anywhere else or not. And they'll come here even if we don't have the aid to give them. They'll come here, if they possibly can, before going elsewhere where they would get financial aid. Many of them do go elsewhere, and then quit and come here.

There are good reasons for that. Some writing programs have a lousy faculty, so right away there's nobody who can teach you anything. Their own taste isn't high enough to help you. Some writing faculties are so small that you don't really have a community of writers to talk to. Some writing programs are just adjuncts to the English program, and you're really there to work hard to get an M.A. or a Ph.D. and a writing course is something you take as a kind of option, an elective, and you don't have much time for it, so you don't get much writing done, because you're busy doing other things. Some writing programs are located in big cities where the faculty disappears. They're not around. And even in some programs that aren't located in cities, the faculty isn't around. The best thing about this program is that the faculty is around. I mean, you see them on the softball field, you see them in the Union, and when you've got a question, you just ask them.

Vance Bourjaily:



VANCE BOURJAILY has become the Workshop's fiction patriarch; the coming fall will mark the beginning of his twentieth year on the staff—give or take a few years for travel, recuperation, et cetera. *His most recent novel is* Now Playing at Canterbury. *In progress is a new book, presently entitled* These Blue Girls. *Bourjaily lives outside Iowa City on Red Bird Farm; by some definitions he is a gentleman farmer, but he is no dabbler and he also talks and writes knowledgeably about crops and cattle.*

WILBERS: How do you think a writer benefits from attending the Iowa Writers' Workshop?

BOURJAILY: Well, Iowa works for different people in different ways, but more than anything else it provides an ambiance, an atmosphere. It's a place where a bunch of writers of various ages live together in the same town, drink in the same bar, and have a certain Byzantine business to do together. In this atmosphere, finding yourself a member of a group of peers—possibly for the first time in your life because you were always the kid who could write but there wasn't anybody else around quite like you in your high school or college—two things happen. For one thing, you learn a certain humility about what you have taken to be your unique talent. You find out that there're an awful lot of people around who are just as talented. Talent is a cheap commodity. At the same time, you're reassured that there are people around who seem to make sense and function

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normally, who don't think that the idea of writing a great novel or great poem is a preposterous goal. In fact, a couple of hundred people think that it's a marvelous thing to do and they're all there and they're all talking about it and they're all trying to do it.

From that standpoint, a writing program is not all that unlike the literary capital of a country that has a literary capital. After all, in England, particularly in I guess the eighteenth century, if you were a young writer, you went to London, you got into the coffee houses, you tried to sit at a table near enough to Dr. Johnson's to hear what he was saying, and you got little writing jobs—but it all happened in London. It was centered in London. In France, the same sort of thing all centered on the café life of Paris and in the twenties, obviously, American writers learned that and took advantage of it. They made their own Paris within Paris.

That sort of localizing of a literary place went on in this country in Greenwich Village at one time, in the twenties and thirties. It kind of disappeared in the Depression. After the Second World War, it became very fragmented. New York has not since then really been a literary capital—it's been a publishing capital. It's where the business of literature is carried on. But it's not a comfortable working atmosphere where writers know each other and see each other from time to time and have a few drinks together, swap girlfriends and boyfriends, all that kind of stuff. I've seen this sort of thing for American writers both start and end in Mexico City. There were a group of us in Mexico City in the early fifties. Obviously, there was a time when it all took place in San Francisco. I've seen it sporadically in New York, but not in a really concentrated and continuing way. I've never seen it any place as strongly as I have in Iowa City.

WILBERS: Has the University of Iowa itself contributed to this atmosphere?

BOURJAILY: Well, in a way, I suppose. As a result of Paul Engle's work and perhaps as a result, too, of there having been a strong tradition of productive people both in music and theater, Iowa is good about supporting artistic endeavor. The extraordinary thing about this University is that in supporting research it makes no distinction between scientific or scholarly and imaginative work. They feel that a painter or a composer or a writer who achieves publication or display or performance is achieving a record of publication as beneficial to the University as scholarly publication and scientific publication. The University itself, as part of its educational pride in the quality of its faculty, is willing to concede that creative work is just as valid as any other kind and therefore takes no exception to the idea of supporting loads of free time in which to write books, just as a guy doing diabetes research in the hospital is given lots of free time in which he is not teaching or treating patients. He's working on his research.

WILBERS: How has the Workshop changed since you came here to teach in 1957?

BOURJAILY: Well, it was a more innocent time then. It was smaller. The Workshop itself was located in the temporary buildings over by the Union, which is now the Union parking lot, and I think we all had considerable affection for those old tin buildings. In 1957, there were still a number of older students around, the Korean War Veterans, and it was in general a much younger faculty. We were all pretty close to the students in age. It made for an easy-going kind of student-teacher relationship. Tom Williams, whose book won the National Book Award last year, was a student here then. Tom was a guy who had published a novel before coming here and he was virtually my age—a couple years younger. Tom and I became very close friends and still are. We used to go duck hunting on the Iowa River together, morning after morning. Fishing in the spring. Our trout fishing group would go up to Northeast Iowa when spring came and would generally include Kim Merker, and a guy named Pete Everwine, a poet of some distinction now. In addition to hunting and fishing and the usual partying, there was a regular Friday night poker game that generally met at my house, which was again Merker and Everwine, Tom Williams, Justice. Bill Murray used to play with us—he was a graduate student then. We all used to really look forward to our weekly poker game.

A much more significant difference was that in 1957 there were not a lot of jobs around teaching creative writing. The students at that time were single-mindedly interested in developing themselves as writers, seeing if they could become writers, seeing what they could learn about writing. We never thought about teaching. We never thought about teaching jobs as something that the M.F.A. certified a student as qualified to undertake. It was an exception when a student wanted to go into university teaching. The M.F.A. was a studio degree. And while it might turn out that a few people would *have* to teach or would like teaching well enough to want to teach, this whole idea that somehow you do two years at Iowa, get an M.F.A., and go out and get a teaching job had really not taken any root in the students' minds, nor had it in mine.

When I was an undergraduate, it never occurred to me that I might become a college teacher. I knew I wasn't qualified. I never went to graduate school. It just wasn't one of the things I was going to do with my life. The thing I was going to do with my life, obviously, was to write books and to make enough money that way to support myself and my family. The books came along all right, but the earnings didn't.

Still, when I first came out here, I had no idea of staying more than a year and then, when I decided to stay the second year, that was going to be it. It certainly was not part of my vision of what I'd be doing when I left after the second year at Iowa that I'd ever be back teaching again. I had done that and it was fun and it was interesting. And that was pretty much the attitude of the students. The kids then didn't think of themselves as preparing to be teachers—they thought of themselves as preparing to be writers, quite single-mindedly. The idea that teaching and writing didn't often go very well together was a prevalent one. I think I had that idea myself, though I was gradually learning that there simply aren't any jobs away from the academic world which provide you the kind of free time that you find here.

WILBERS: The question always arises whether or not

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creative writing can be taught. Nelson Algren, who once taught in the Iowa program, has attacked the whole concept. More specifically, he has written that "the Writers' Workshop provides sanctuary from those very pressures in which creativity is forged. If you want to create something of your own, stay away." How would you respond to that?

BOURJAILY: Well, I think it's a terrific over-simplification. In the sense in which that phrase is used, there isn't anything that can be taught. You can't teach mathematics. That is to say, you cannot create a gift for originating mathematical concepts in a mind in which that gift does not innately exist. In the same way, you cannot teach somebody to be a great painter or a great musician or a great biologist. What Nelson's lines ignore is that excellence is unteachable in whatever field. You can't teach somebody who doesn't have it physically to be a great football player. But you can put him in a football program and give him the right kind of competition and watch what he does and have experienced people in that particular kind of athletic endeavor correct the way he holds a football when he passes it or suggest that he turn it slightly more to the side when he punts it. These are things which, indeed, the gifted athlete might by trial and error find out for himself in time. But what coaching in a situation like that does is to save some of that time.

I think that all we can pretend to do in a program like this is to say that for certain gifted people, who are temperamentally suited to the life in Iowa City to begin with, a certain amount of time can be saved by coming to this workshop for a couple of years. I often think in the case of my own career, that a great time for me to have come to a program like this would have been after I had written my second novel—a bad novel that has never been published. It was the point at which I became self-conscious about craft and I really had to learn something about writing and needed unimpeded time and the company of my peers. And my time instead was impeded with all sorts of jobs, including newspaper work, and the company of the other elevator operators and window trimmers and waiters and messenger boys and newspaper men.

Now, in my mind the learning that goes on here has very little to do with the structure of classes and courses and the resulting degree. We have a structure of classes and courses and a resulting degree because we must, because we are part of a university. The first thing I would do if I were somehow empowered to have my own writing program would be to throw out all of that structure, because that has so little to do with the learning that goes on here. On the other hand, I wouldn't say that the workshop sessions themselves are totally irrelevant. And I do think that the literature courses are quite necessary for some, because students these days are not terribly well read and you just push them through a bunch of books they ought to be reading anyway.

WILBERS: If the workshops and the literature courses are not the primary means of teaching and learning here, what is?

BOURJAILY: First, I think I should make a distinction between teaching and learning. I can't *teach* anybody to be a writer, but somebody might come here and *learn* to be a writer. Now, the learning that goes on, goes on for many reasons. It goes on because of the exchanges that students have with their peers and colleagues. For some, learning may be accomplished by being in a student-teacher relationship with an older, established writer—if they happen to respect that older, established writer and he or she is able to articulate for that particular student certain things that make sense.

Generally speaking, when you're working with somebody on a manuscript, you're not telling them things they don't already sense intuitively, but you're helping them get those things into words or get those things into concepts they can make use of. Almost always when I'm conferring with a good student and I make a negative point about a manuscript, it turns out to be something that he or she already knew, but kind of hoped it wasn't that bad. You just confirm what they already suspected.

At that level, it's very much the same kind of work that editors once did for publishing companies. Editors don't function that way anymore. Editors no longer really edit manuscripts. They sell, promote, produce, they write jacket copy, they're terribly busy and they don't work much with writers. They don't work with writers as Max Perkins worked with Fitzgerald and Wolfe. There's a void, because at a certain time in your life as a writer, it's good to have somebody whom you respect, who can go over your stuff and talk with you about it, criticizing or generalizing or just patting you on the back. But there's a void in American publishing in the absence of that kind of editor. And I think that the writing programs—not just this one but writing programs in general—fill that void for the developing writer.

WILBERS: How would you go about assessing the relative success or failure of a program like the Iowa Workshop?

BOURJAILY: You know, I think if we produce a Flannery O'Connor in the fifties and a Tom Williams in the sixties and that if one person comes out of here in the seventies who's that good, I think the program is worthwhile. You don't expect a conservatory to make everybody who goes through it a concert star or a university football program to send out every man on the squad to be a super star in the pros—it just doesn't happen that way. These are programs—take the example of the conservatory—which expose people to a lot of music and a lot of music training and produce lots of competent musicians, lots of high school music teachers, lots of people who give piano lessons at home, some who stop taking music very seriously—maybe a few performers, maybe a great star every decade, and a bunch of people who find it a good enough educational discipline for their minds and go on and do something else.

Same way with football programs. They produce a bunch of high school coaches, a few good enough to go into the pros, who become small-time names in the pros, but a lot of guys who are just going to leave athletics and play a little weekend tennis and touch football. That was a good part of their lives and they're done with it. But to put the burden on a writing program of turning out ten prominent writers every year and a Nobel Prize every decade is just silly. You don't make that requirement of any kind of teaching program. □

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TWO GENTEEL LADIES

Fiction By Elaine Mueller

ELAINE MUELLER "lives in a small town in the Catskills . . ." "Two Genteel Ladies" marks her first appearance in the NAR.

I am my *things*," the woman said to her friend. "That's really the way I see myself. I wouldn't exist without them, and they wouldn't exist without me—anyhow, they wouldn't exist long, in their present condition. I wake up in the morning and I'm happy, because I'm surrounded by things I own—my bed, my bedclothes, the pictures on the wall, the curtains on the window, and I'm happy when I look at them. I'm happy when I make breakfast, because all my dishes and pots and pans have meaning for me, and when I have to spend a night away from my house, I'm unhappy, because I don't feel anything for the things around me, and I feel I'm not really there, and that I'm not really me, until I'm back among my own things. Maybe this is peculiar, or even cowardly, but I can't help it, it's what I am."

Her friend was skeptical. "What about your children, or your past experiences, don't they offer some sense of identity?"

"I'm not sure I ever had an experience," the Thing woman said. "Things happened in my life that seemed like the things that happen in everyone's life. I had parents, and a husband, and children, but they were more or less like other people's parents and husbands and children. I don't feel I affected them one way or another. But I have an effect on my things, I can take care of them and keep them in good condition and put them in places where they show up to their best advantage. After I have them for awhile, they begin to lose their disparate aspects and they become like me. They assume my aura and I assume theirs. We exchange essences. I think this is my best definition, if I have one."

"You're too modest," said her friend the No-Thing woman.

The two ladies, who were neighbors, were drinking sherry together on a summer night. They had known each other for years, since childhood in fact, but previously they had not been friends. Now they saw each other almost daily, without becoming really intimate, for their minds continued to collide and bounce off each other without achieving union. Each tried, unsuccessfully, to change the other, and clung to her own attitudes, but each was eager to return to the cozy little battle.

"How can she be happy thinking of herself as *things?*" the No-Thing woman—let us call her Rebecca—mused, locked in her own unsatisfactory solitude.

Rebecca was a woman who had loved men. Her observers and ill-wishers, who were numerous and chiefly female, did not believe she really loved men. They believed she loved only herself and the sensations men gave her. But this was not the case. She loved men and the interesting things they said to her in her kitchen and her living room and in automobiles and in restaurants and on ships and at the beach and on mountaintops and in the desert, for there was hardly anywhere Rebecca would not go to hear the revelations and confessions of men. Chiefly she loved the truly shocking things men said to her in the dead of night. Men said to her, *I couldn't tell this to anyone else*. And they told her stories of betrayals and acts of vindictiveness, some of them truly squalid tales, often—in fact almost always—involving acts of treachery to women. They said to her, *Aren't you shocked? Don't you hate me?* And Rebecca, who had large breasts, replied, *Why should I hate you?* and gave each teller a kiss of deep forgiveness. She felt powerful and beneficent, almost a goddess, and departing from her, men felt refreshed, free to commit fresh scandals, convinced of a pitiful universe.

Meantime Rebecca went her way quite untouched, except from the tongues of women whose men had been so unjustly forgiven. She kept her reputation for great wit and daring, and the disapproval (at times, the smoldering hatred) of women bothered her not at all, since she did quite well without the approval of women. *Do you know her?* men asked each other, a little fearfully, all of them pretending not to know her *well*. As, indeed, they did not.

One day this woman surveyed her large, ruined breasts, and her reddening face, and retired from her career of forgiver of men. She resolved to save herself by style alone. *No, I will not be a fool,* she said to herself, *I will not let myself be laughed at*. Thus she retired to the bare old house, which adjoined that of the Thing Woman (let us call her Anne) and with a set jaw, she peered into a vista of years that were to contain nothing except not being a fool. It was not an enticing vision, but she set herself the task of learning the art of stoicism—not the merriest of arts, but a course suitable, she felt, for her position.

Her house, and that of Anne, had been identical twins when new, but now they were vastly different from each other. Anne's house was tidy and cozy, with plants that grew and a teakettle that whistled and a clock that chimed and a cat that purred and a bird that sang in its ornate pagoda cage. Rebecca's house was little better than a barn, cold and drafty and dusty, with rickety furniture and cracked dishes and ravaged books and sloppily packed trunks and an askew painting that hung, mockingly, over a fireplace that smoked. Here, meditat-

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ing her many forgivenesses and her ruined breasts, sat Rebecca, and the visiting between the two women was not back and forth, but mainly forth, on the part of Anne, for the meditating sibyl disliked leaving her own house, little reason as she had to like it.

Anne was appalled at Rebecca's indifference to household arrangements. She felt that if Rebecca could be cajoled into a better understanding of her own possessions, the rancor would fade from Rebecca's face and be replaced by "peace". "How can she be happy with her memories?" Anne wondered, "since all of it came to nothing."

So she kept urging little improvements. She persuaded Rebecca to have chairs recaned and tables refinished, occasioning little trips into the world that made Anne happy, and that did not entirely displease Rebecca since they sometimes met attractive craftsmen whose shrewdness and competence gave her nostalgic little pangs. Yet the moment the refurbished thing was returned to its place, its new comeliness was lost in the general air of decay. For the question that exercised Rebecca's mind, making what seemed to be the dry lobes of her brain rub against each other with threshing power, was, What in the name of God am I going to do with all these extra years? And somehow the answer did not seem to involve furniture. Yet at times, as they drove through the countryside in search of the perfect repairman, she looked at Anne's determined face and realized that Anne was doing her best and that this "best" was predicated by a sort of fondness, which seemed to Rebecca quite strange, and not ungratifying.

But sometimes Anne overstepped the invisible line that separated their attitudes, such as the time she suggested to Rebecca that she have her one "good" painting restored. For these restore-and-repair ideas were all she had to offer her friend. Anne was baffled, and not a little awed, by the magnitude of Rebecca's grief. For Anne, the loss of her own small looks, the gentle withering of her lemon-sized breasts, had not been an occasion for tears. She was one of those women born to be a perpetual fifty-three. Thus one day she said, "That's a nice painting—you should have it cleaned and re-framed."

"Ah, poor Moran!" Rebecca said, and laughed.

Anne, who knew this reminiscent laugh that preceded Rebecca's "romantic" stories, pressed on, "Really, it's quite a good painting, even if he never did much of anything else, and it would make you feel better if you got it spiffed up a bit and hung it in a better light."

"Yes, it might be a nice thing."

Missing the irony, or choosing to overlook it, Anne said, "Let me take it to a restorer."

"Not just now," Rebecca said quickly.

But when Anne was out of the house, Rebecca allowed herself the luxury of anger. *Dunce,* she thought, *fool, dense bitch,* how can she look at the painting as if it were a mere *thing?* And she looked at the portrait Moran had painted of her. It was not quite accurate, since they were not together at the time, and it was overlaid with a kind of irony that bordered on the sentimental and it was thus, as Rebecca knew better than anyone else, without redeeming artistic value: quite apart from the fact that it had no value because Moran's talents had come to nothing and he had not made a "name." She thought of Moran, of the meaning, or rather the meaninglessness, of his life, his extravagance, his conceit, his vile temper, his total lack of honorableness, and of the women he had betrayed (including, at times, herself: but she had learned to protect herself with wit, and her own lack of honor.) She thought of all the times she had exiled him from her life, and all the times he had come back to her, with irresistibly funny stories of his treachery to other women. And each time she had forgiven him for what he had done to "them," while protecting herself from what he might do to her. It was guessed by most people who knew Rebecca, except by Anne, that in spite of Rebecca's grand view of man-woman relationships, her special weakness was for the painter Moran. And of course the women—the other women whom he seduced, exploited, and betrayed—knew this very well, and formed a little coterie of enemies. And so Rebecca fretted, that she had no special friend just now but Anne, but her tea cups and bird cages and her mother's lorgnette, who could not appreciate Rebecca's Moran stories because no man had ever told her (Anne) anything interesting. It was well known that Anne's husband had never said anything interesting to Anne in the dead of night, except to ask, occasionally, for bicarbonate of soda, after a heavy dinner.

Thus the painting continued to hang crookedly over the fireplace, with a dusty vase for company, until it was there discovered by its creator—by himself, the painter Moran, the hero of the many uncollected stories of her life, and the witty commentator on many others.

Rebecca, throwing open her door, was taken aback by his wizened being, which she took at first for an impersonation, and by the slighting glance he gave to her own ruined face, but she let him in, so absolutely surprised she could not even cover her shock with babbling. "So here you are," he said. "This is where you went." He glanced around the house and saw the askew painting. "You still have it," he said with satisfaction. They sat down and began telling each other versions of their histories since their last meeting, each concealing disbelief, for they had maintained files on each other in various ways, and each knew well those sore and prideful points on which the other would lie.

Still he is here, she thought. Moran. And a triumphant phoenix came alive in her heart, spreading its wings, its bones creaking and feathers dusty and lanky.

"So," said Moran, at Rebecca's slapdash but not ungenerous table, "how do you amuse yourself, these days?"

And she began to tell him about Anne. She drew the portrait with wicked brushstrokes, achieving a figure somewhat comparable to those pictures he had drawn for her of traduced wives and lovers. And as she talked, encouraged by Moran's secretive smile, she caught sight of, and recaptured, a youthful sense of herself. At first this was but a mere speck on a landscape, but as she spoke, it grew, and took on full, robust color, until her whole body seemed to glow with this rediscovered happiness of being.

"But I can't do justice to Anne," she finished. "You must meet her."

"I'd like to," Moran said, and looked at her with those acutely intelligent eyes that seemed so candid that no woman (at the moment, not even Rebecca) could believe they reflected anything but a truthful cast of mind. "So you have become a woman among women."

"What time does to us!" Rebecca said, and laughed.

But Anne, suffering from coyness, did not appear at her

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usual time, and Rebecca took Moran to visit her. Anne was oddly blushful. She took Rebecca's past very seriously, and had not wanted to be an inconvenience. But Moran was not at all distressed. He sat down and began to admire Anne's things. One after another, the chair itself, the carafe, the glass, he set himself to admire, with little knowing comments on origin and workmanship, revealing virtues that Anne herself had not surmised. Rebecca was at first pleased at Moran's courtliness, but then as she was more and more ignored, she grew huffy, and finally appalled. She had forgotten Moran's highflying tastes, always a petty source of conflict between them, and as she sat sipping her sherry she began to recall all the more tasteless sides of Moran. While thus engaged, the phoenix folded its wings and pulled down its leathery eyelids, and its feathers, one by one, drooped with dust and became dust itself.

"I must be on my way," Moran said, and Rebecca, who had begun to wonder how she would get rid of him, had a lingering sense of chagrin. Once he was gone, she returned to Anne's house and inveighed against him, recalling not all, but a smart anthology of ugly Moran stories. She was later to regret this unguarded outburst.

For Anne became suddenly peculiar, seldom visiting Rebecca and seeming abstracted when Rebecca visited her. Then she went away, ostensibly to visit her daughter. Rebecca, rattling about in her dusty house, was surprised at how much she missed her. Peering through her window, she saw the neighbor boy arriving and departing from Anne's house, where he fed the cat and the canary. It vaguely irked Rebecca that this chore had not been entrusted to her. She began to think of ways to please Anne—perhaps even by having Moran's picture restored.

But then Anne came back, bringing with her Moran.

Rebecca saw them arrive, and the fiery blood flew to her face, even as she was able to write the whole script of the unconfided seduction. She understood it all, all, so quickly and thoroughly that she hardly spared a thought to Anne's duplicity. *Who could resist Moran,* she asked herself, *even an aging Moran, not I: how could she help but, it was her only chance*. But that he, Moran, had chosen to mock her in her retirement, that he had looked ironically at her withered breasts and approvingly at Anne's china cups, and that he had put her, Rebecca, in such a questionable light and reduced her past life to a humiliating folly—that he had done this to her, his old ally, perhaps his only friend! In the center of her horror was the question, why, *why*, had it been her special vanity to forgive Moran. If she had hated him sufficiently, on all the occasions when he deserved to be hated, then she would have driven him from her life so that he could not return to triumph over her this one last time.

But even as her passion raged, she was preparing herself to "discover" them, before they attempted to avoid her, as she foresaw they might, for in no way did she intend to accord them the luxury of estrangement from her. She splashed cold water on her obstinately red face and powdered the great horselike nose that seemed to grow as the rest of her face shrank, and then, her heart pounding madly, she plunged across the adjoining back yards. Anne answered the door, looking somewhat afraid, and Rebecca did not miss the unexpected frilliness of her attire, and there, behind her, looking almost guilty, stood Moran, caught in the very act of omelet-making.

"Anne!" Rebecca cried out. "Moran!" And then, in a burst of inspiration, *"Anne Moran!"* and she began to laugh, the effortless, innocent, crystalline laughter of her youth. "Oh, how terribly funny," she said, and actual tears of merriment stood in her eyes.

She allowed herself to be seated, to accept a drink, as she realized that her approbation was not being thrown away. She refused to let Moran catch her eye, but turned all her attention to Anne, who seemed to be a little crazed by her own daring. The little story was revealed to her, the notes, the phone calls, the meeting, and silly enough Rebecca thought it, but nothing in her demeanor suggested she was anything but delighted with this wonderful turn of events. It was a bravura performance, one of her best, and she did not prolong it.

Then she could do nothing but sit back and watch as Moran enmeshed himself into Anne's idea of being. And he was all bustling and proprietary, the high priest of Anne's temple of possessions, polishing and preserving, bringing a sheen of elegance to Anne's sweet little house, while Anne grew so pink and demure that Rebecca hardly knew the woman. Actually she hardly considered Anne's temporary happiness, knowing Moran as she did, and having seen many other women made (fleetingly) happy by Moran. Nor was she charitable in mood, for Anne's happiness or disillusion seemed beside the point compared to her own vast suffering.

For she was trapped in her reflections, none of which suited her. He had managed to poison every self-approving recollection. Wherever she turned, in the gallery of her past life, she met his mocking figure. Could it be possible, she asked herself, that I was nothing but a fool, not just with him, but with all of them? This, she realized, was Anne's secret view of her: and now there was Moran to fortify this pitying attitude.

Pity, she thought, no, no, this is intolerable: and thus her thoughts remained fixed as the blowsy glamor of late summer turned to the rain of early fall, and she fed logs to the fire and sat before the hearth clad in her great sweaters and flopping skirts. She watched the now leaping, now guttering, flames, and attempted to regroup her thoughts, which darted this way and that like an army in rout. Her visions of the past, her terror of the future, her lonely present, and always the image of Moran! the gloating Moran, the unconscionable Moran!—all these mingled with the reds and yellows and mauves of the listless fire, and sometimes she jumped up as if stung, and belabored the rain-soaked logs with a poker. What is the point of all this suffering? she asked herself. What can I gain from it? Nothing. And at times she truly wished her life to end, but then scouted the thought, lest it show on her face and give comfort to Moran.

As it turned out, Anne's children were indeed like other people's children, in that they flew into a panic when they heard of their mother's marriage to the disreputable painter Moran.

Rebecca, whose communications system with the outside world was intact, if rusted, began to hear these rumblings long before they were heard by her neighbors. But then she heard it from Anne herself, that messages were received, that inquiries

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were being made, but knowing the terms of Anne's husband's will, she shrugged and said, "Well, what's the difference?"

"Oh, I hate trouble," Anne said: and Rebecca thought: Well, then, you should have avoided Moran.

"They can't actually *do* anything," she said.

"But I'm afraid Jim will be on their side," Anne said (Jim being the formidable attorney, her late husband's brother). "He's always *helped* me before." In Anne's world, people were divided into helpers and nonhelpers.

"But now," Rebecca said maliciously, "you have Moran."

Then one morning in late fall, Rebecca met Moran on the street. He looked nervous. "They're coming this afternoon," he said.

"Both?" She knew the children were at odds with each other.

"Anne wants you to come over."

Anne was in a fit of nervousness, and Rebecca agreed to stay for the visit. Indeed, she would not have missed it. Waiting for the children, she noted Moran's lips, tightened to a straight line, his quick, impatient gestures, and his controlled fury when Anne spilled a cup of tea. In her practiced way, Rebecca could foretell the rest. (She remembered a time in the past when she saw pacifist women demonstrating against war toys, and remarked to a friend, *"They must mean Moran."*) Next, unless providence itself intervened, would come temper tantrums, rages, violence, tears (Anne's), "repentance" (Moran's), new outbursts, new cowerings, money troubles, flight—the ineluctable way of the man. And from Anne's frightened look, she wondered if she, too, saw all this looming ahead, if Anne remembered the tasteless Moran stories. . . .

The children arrived punctually. They looked at Moran, who was now at his controlled best—all smiles, charm, affability. He showed them even the studio he had set up, complete with a painting-in-progress. Rebecca, the art lover, dismissed it without even a pang for the wasted talent; the children looked as if they wished they could photograph it and take a copy to Knoedler's for evaluation. Quelled but not mollified, they left, swept away in their brightly colored little vehicles like two armored insects.

"Was it all right?" Anne asked her nervously.

"Well, at least it's over," said Rebecca.

Letting Rebecca out, Anne whispered, "They want me to lend them *money*."

"They'll tear you apart," Rebecca said, and she did not mean only the children.

And, while she pondered how the ugly, irascible, vain, intolerable old man could have evolved from her one-time "demon lover," Rebecca's telephone rang, and proved to be one of Anne's children, asking, might they meet somewhere? And Rebecca, feeling furtive and in some way (what way?) vindicated, agreed to go. We'll see, we'll see, she said to herself, and looked squintingly at Anne's house before she drove away.

The children, a male and a female, met her with nervous courtesy at a restaurant. Rebecca sat down and ordered a cocktail, and began to talk about Europe, which they were discussing when she came in. "When *I* was in Paris—" she began, and the young people listened respectfully. "When *I* was in Paris—" And suddenly she began telling them stories, exotic tales from her great repertoire, her treasurehouse of anecdotal insights into her age, dropping names so fast and copiously they could hardly keep up: "The ex-governor's brother, who was enormously homosexual," and, "Her father was head of NATO at the time," and, "She was the mistress of the President of France," all of these tied in with stories of the utmost ridiculousness, so that those sober children began to laugh weakly and helplessly as they had never laughed before. ("What does it matter who Moran is, or who your mother is?" was her attitude. "This is who *I* am.") In the middle of one of these tales, the young woman asked, "But was *he* there—Moran?" Rebecca put her head to one side, pretending to think. "Oh, Moran, Moran—no, he was in prison, at the time, in Mexico." "In *prison?*" the male child said, with the air of the prosecutor who has broken the case. "Oh, it was nothing serious—just a hotel bill," Rebecca said. "The wife he had then—was it Jane? Or was it Sarah?—or perhaps it was Louise—went down and straightened it out. It was nothing, really." And then she went on in her wild way, as the children exchanged glances (they knew now how to proceed) and as she leapt from story to story, never touching directly on Moran and yet never far away from him, the young people went on laughing, and she felt she had reclaimed all her ancient powers. "You're wonderful," the young woman said, *"wonderful,"* and she looked at Rebecca with frank admiration. She returned their smile like a benign and yet terrible bird, fluttering her valiant wings that could—if she chose—carry them off to marvelous heights and then let them fall, helpless, unarmed.

"Am I?" she said. "Well, perhaps, at times."

But as they let her go (the female one kissing her cheek) they said, "But what can we do about Moran?"

Rebecca said, with her antique roguishness, "I'm sure you'll work it out!"

Driving home, she was full of her triumph. That's one thing I can do, she thought. I can amuse the young. Why had she been so miserable over Moran? Why, what was he, except a joke—everyone had known, everyone who truly knew her, that he was a joke, her favorite joke perhaps, but not a person of seriousness. And Anne, she thought, with her chandeliers and coal scuttles, her cups and stemware—she saw them all as trophies stacked up in the middle of a huge football field, with the female child and the male child grabbing and shoving the *things* into shopping carts, while implacable legal forces swooped down in helicopters, as Moran—a comically dapper Moran—escaped through a hole in the fence. What shambles, Rebecca thought, what a wonderful scuffle it will be, and laughed as she turned her key and let herself in her house.

She was mounting the stairs when she saw, from the landing, the skeleton of Anne's house. A single light burned in the bedroom window. Behind the shade she saw the silhouette of Moran, and something about it made her pause in her ascent. I was not, she thought, without responsibility in this matter, and it came to her that any day now, after the debacle, after the confusion, Moran would come to her and say, *"Forgive me."* Forgive him! But of course: that was the inevitable coda: that was the way the story had always ended before.

Why should it suddenly seem to her to be monstrous?

And standing there on her drafty landing, struck by the meaning of that lighted window, she wished, for the first time, that she had led a different, a more generous, a more contemplative life. □

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BURYING THE BABIES

By Cynthia Macdonald

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BURYING THE BABIES

1. "Does this book tell all about such pretty things, mother?" said Charles, going up to the table and turning the leaves. "What is that man looking into the round box for, mother?—Is he sitting on a table?"

Common School Classics, 1846

7. If occasion should arise, I can construct cannon and mortars and light ordnance in shape both ornamental and useful and different from those in common use.

"Letter to the Duke of Milan"
Leonardo da Vinci, 1482

Sit down, dear sisters, and candidly question yourselves. Are you doing right when you lay down your arms, after the careful drilling of the years behind you and say there is nothing more for you to do or dare?. . .How suffering humanity is crying for the helpfulness of home-gendered virtues. How motherless men and women are fainting for the comforting which blessed women, who have filled and beautified the home with practical womanliness, can alone give them. O homekeepers tread softly!

What a Woman of Forty-Five Ought To Know,
Mrs. Emma F. Angell Drake, M.D., 1902

Female puppets have neither feet nor legs. The junior puppeteer simulates their appearance by placing both hands beneath the kimono and gripping the inner hem with the thumb and forefinger of the left hand and the forefinger and middle finger of the right hand. It sounds a comparatively simple operation, but it requires infinite skill and understanding to do it properly. In its way it is just as important as the more spectacular manipulation of the head.

The Puppet Theatre of Japan
A. C. Scott, 1963

If I give you water in my right hand, will you
Be able to hold onto it? I have been trained for forty-five years
To hold on: to stand on my head on a ladder; to prize litter

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Until there is no room for me in the room; to letter
Signs in Gold Gothic; to let: sentences escape because
They are not supposed to blot, and flushings clog because it
Is too expensive to call the plumber or the beautician;
To let: soup spoil because we might need it for tomorrow's
Picnic; to let: a bed-sitter for two pounds a week,
The contribution of Weight Watchers, who are sponsoring
The Strong Man Contest at the Washington County Fair.
He begins with the lift and jerk and becomes the latter
When he heaves up that three-hundred and fifty pound woman,
Vomits her all over the crowd; so that they are picking
Kidneys, fingers, all her parts out of their flower-trimmed
Straw hats, their beards, their all-day suckers for weeks.

If I give you water in my right hand will it repress fingers?

> *The old Puritans repressed sex and were passionate; our new puritan represses passion and is sexual . . . I define this puritanism as consisting of three elements. First,* a state of alienation from the body. *Second,* the separation of emotion from reason. *And third,* the use of the body as a machine.
>
> Love and Will
> *Rollo May, 1969*

To wait on my head on a ladder for the winner of the Strong Man Contest,
The Atlas Contest at the Washington County Fair.

1. When a male puppet steps forward he places his left foot first, the female puppet, her right foot. This is the differentiation between the sexes.

2. When a puppet calls out another's name it points at the skies with its hand.

Heaves up that three-hundred and fifty pound woman, a new
Constellation, claiming the sky with her parts.

> *At summer eve, when Heav'n's aerial bow*
> *Spans with bright arch the glittering hills below,*
> *Why to you mountain turns the musing eye,*
> *Whose sunbright summit mingles with the sky?*
> *Why do those cliffs of shadowy tint appear*
> *More sweet than all the landscape smiling near? –*
> *'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,*
> *And robes the mountains in its azure hue.*
>
> The Pleasures of Hope
> *Thomas Campbell, 1859*

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But on the whole this Fair is truly that:
Fair, fair, my love, trimmed with caracul, white cumulus,
The red-and-white striped tents glued on blue sky;
So that during the Star Spangled, the crowd can look at any
Horizon and feel tri-colored blood pulsing reflexively.
And we can kiss before you are called away by
Your service. When I was a child and heard
FDR on the radio, I always stood for our anthem, my eyes
Circling the room to find a red pincushion, white paper,
Blue cornflowers. Blue cornflower: bachelor's button. The groom
Plucks it out of his lapel, as he walks away
From the altar after the ceremony, to indicate he
Is no longer one. (Is that a sentence?) Then he goes out to care for
The horses because matrimony doesn't mean a day off from
The job: "The horses must be curried every day."

> A sentence made by coupling meanwhile
> a couple there makes grateful dubeity
> named atlas coin in a loan
> Sentences may be alike.
> Harbour this for me.
> She harbours this for me.
> Sentences make use of waning.
>
> *How to Write*
> Gertrude Stein, 1931

The moon wanes into adolescence, a stage. Our eyes
Circle the room for its parts, diagraming, parsing.

> 2. No, my dear, it is a platform, or stage, to hold that large box as you call it. The box is a telescope through which that gentleman is looking at the beautiful moon. He can see it almost as plain as you can see your face in a mirror, and that book tells what he sees.
>
> *Common School Classics*

You hold the moon, a grapefruit, above your head
As your wife reads the sentence and I
Wait with water in my right hand.

> Ten o'clock was the luncheon hour, when all the family met, and my great aunt Louisa was always much in evidence. She was a dwarf, with the crooked malicious mind that so often goes with a crooked body. She had very long, monkey-like arms and whenever she was displeased she would fling them out like the sails of a windmill and hit whichever of her ladies-in-waiting happened to be nearest her.
>
> My Own Story
> Louisa of Tuscany, Ex-Crown Princess of Saxony, 1911

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After the ceremony, the groom demonstrates his prowess
By holding everything up, as the ladies-in-waiting, wait.

> At eight came the diner de ceremonie, which the children heartily enjoyed, as they had had no food since ten o'clock in the morning and my father has often told me how ravenously hungry they used to become.

"Yes, it's delicious though fiery."
"Oh, use the condiments: the coconut, the banana, the nuts,
The raisins, the chutney to tamp the flame in your mouth."
"It tastes like beef, but I know the cooks are Hindus."
"Perhaps it is buffalo, perhaps, horse. Curry covers
The exacter flavors."
"My mouth is still on fire."
"Here, take this water in my hand."
"Your hand is empty . . . Excuse me, I must make
A phone call: check with my service."
I am afraid he will never see, even as
The waves wash over his fingers, the white foam, like
The ruching of his wife's wedding dress, tickles
The hair on his knuckles. He denies the water
As I say, "drink." Denies what the hand harbours.
Yes, there is salt in it and you cannot tell before
You swallow if it will bite the tongue, delighting as it
Sustains. Or will leave you dead in the drifting lifeboat.
With no one to take care of the babies.

> *Let us hurry*
> *Let us save the babies.*
>
> Reasons for Moving
> *Mark Strand, 1968*

The waves wash over his ankles, the foam,
Like the lace on my nightgown, tickles his legs.

> *The minute root hairs are always absorbing water, together with the plant food that is dissolved in it; not free water, but the film water clinging to the grains of soil.*
>
> Soils
> *S. W. Fletcher*

He reads me the symptoms of thirst but refuses
To drink, "Turn on *The Late Show*. Film water. Movie salt."

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(Hume Cronyn, at the tiller, to John Hodiak as Tallulah Bankhead looks angrily at Hodiak): "Neither can a snake help being born a snake instead of a nightingale. A German can't help being born a German."

Lifeboat
Twentieth Century Fox, 1944

"Tallulah had that hoarse voice anyway. It had nothing to do
With the sinking. Or did it? She never mentioned curry."
"No, the writers at Fox never did. They wrote the dialogue.
She delivered it."
We are floating in my bed, a safe berth we hope,
Watching them struggle with their oars.
They are up to their ears in vines.
"Malaya? Brian Donlevy?"
"No, Alabama. Bette Davis. Tallulah played it
On Broadway. Bankhead, a better last name for *The Little Foxes.*"
She got all the money. Murder covered by
Batting her eyelashes. Magnolia. Honeysuckle.
That's the Southern way of suckling.
I must go to the nursery to check the babies.
They are safe behind glass.

Queen Caroline seems to have possessed considerable individuality, and she must have been a woman of exceptional courage and iron constitution for she insisted on accompanying her husband to the Napoleonic wars, and rode by his side, indifferent to discomfort and fatigue. She had sixteen children and nursed them all herself; the youngest infant went through these campaigns with her, in charge of a nurse, and the Queen used to dismount at intervals and suckle her baby, sitting by the roadside.

That's the Southern way of suckling. What's the
Southern way of suckling? All-day suckers.

What's red and white on the outside and grey and white on the inside?
Campbell's Cream of Elephant Soup.

101 Elephant Jokes
Robert Blake, 1964

Soup. Curlicued lintels. Do I mean lentils? Soup.
Sole. I am cooking, garnishing with parsley,
Currying favor, flavoring filet of sole for you.

The window washer leaves the prints of his neoprene Cats Paw #6
Soles on the radiator. Then he leaves the window,

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Falling when a loop gives way. The water stays in his hand
As the law of falling bodies says it will.

> My Dear, As I look at your lighted window across the park, I look through dirty glass because the window washer never came. I know you won't like it when I agree with Richard and say, Labor is so impossible these days . . .

They have given up high forceps; so they no longer grab
The duodenum by mistake instead of the baby.
In this case, there are two, but not twins: sisters.
Clearly not twins: one weighs three pounds,
Has no fingernails and eyes with a film of soup over them;
The other weighs twelve and is developed in all her particulars:
There is definitely several months separating them.
The Spaniards will be absolutely fascinated with this;
They are so fond of oddities, they may rename a square
In Seville as they did with the three-headed swallow.

> A sentence divided into three.
> There are these in dissatisfac-
> tion. One must make three be
> for them seldom as chance.
> Never allowed to wait. A sent-
> ence divided into three. He is
> never to be allowed to continue
> to commence to prepare to wait.

I am waiting because the window washer never came. Babies
Are so impossible these days.

> 9. Tears may be wiped away with the left hand once in every three times, but if the puppet has its back turned to the audience, the left hand may only be used once during the course of the play.

In my left hand I give you notes: Purcell, Schubert; for
Stanzas; due and overdue. One minute the notes
Look like emeralds. Then like drops of water on blue-notched
Petals. Then like air. Airs: on a flute, a trombone.
Rounds. Canons. Royal Fireworks Music. I wonder if you
Will be able to hold music in your hand. You want to, but
You weigh everything so carefully, even scales.

Notes due and overdue:

> *Du meine Seele, Du mein Herz*
> *Du meine Wonne, O, du, mein Schmerz;*

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Du mein Welt darein ich lebe;
Mein Himmel, du, darein ich Schwebe;
Mein gutter Geist, mein bessres Ich.

Robert Schumann
"Widmung" 1836

On the polished brass scales, their rounds like suns,
It took weeks for you to measure, to assay, to say
We could meet for lunch. And then there wasn't any.
It was a vegetarian restaurant. The lentils with
Chopped parsley matched your eyes as you spread the mixture
On the Chapati. There were red swallows and Missions on
The wallpaper. A tryst. Even though you had taken off
Your ring and put a cornflower in your lapel, I watched
Your hands and knew there were still problems.

Born–Bridalled–Shrouded–
In a day–
"My husband"–women say–
Stroking the Melody–
Is this–the way?

Emily Dickinson
"Title divine is mine"

You weigh everything so carefully, on the polished brass
Scales, their rounds like glistered snails,

4. But I was not naughty or cross; I was trying to pull this great worm out of this pretty shell; I am better than a worm and I want it myself. I shook the ugly thing and pulled him, but see how he crawls in again on purpose to tease me.

In your fist you hold what we will become: the game: shells.
The game: paper, rock, scissors. The game: cards.
Carmen's fortune: Spades: "toujours la mort."

The old woman in the lavender robe, which fades like afternoon light,
Sits playing solitaire in the window framed by the curlicued
Lintels, framed by concrete garlands. ("Framed, I was framed,"
John Garfield leaned against the door, leaking blood and
Words at his blonde girl who looked like the angel on
Top of a Christmas tree. "Baby, I love you," and most
Of the women, even the ones who'd won china, sighed, thinking
Of their own husbands who'd never drag themselves, bleeding,
Through Hell's Kitchen to die speaking of love. THE END: the women
Clapped as the music of the electric organ played them out.)
She is drinking from a cup she got at Loew's in '34

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As she sits at the table, sorting earrings, cards, stockings, Victrola
Records, trying to make pairs out of her accumulation, a match
For herself. She does. And it catches the hem of the sleeve of
Her lavender robe. And in a second she is all flame,
Sitting Suttee. "Toujours la mort." Only immediate water could
Save her, but the nearest is in the hand of the falling
Window washer. "What a Chanukah candle!" says a child across the street.

> Ah, ah, ah . . . ah, ah.
> Ah, ah, ah . . . ah, ah.
> Lakmé's cadenza, above the Hindoo
> chorus, from the aria, "Where Goes
> the Maiden Straying?" or, "The Bell Song"
>
> *Lakmé*, Leo Delibes, 1883

> The opera is always associated in my mind with an incident which I shall describe as the "Affair of the **Collier**." As everyone knows, the Emeralds of the King of Saxony have world-wide reputation, and when I was married they were given to me to wear set in a tiara, necklace and bracelet. I was delighted to possess the wonderful setting so I asked and received permission to have the necklace made smaller.

The light from the candle refracts through the emeralds. You have
Upset them; they lie in a heap beyond the pail, on the sill.

> The beauty of the stones, and my own sense of the artistic, resulted in my ordering an entirely new **collier** in a lovely Renaissance design. I decided to wear it at a gala performance, and chose a delightful rose chiffon gown to act as a foil to its mysterious green splendour; and it was with conscious pride in my appearance that I seated myself in my box opposite to the King and Queen who were on the other side of the Opera House.

The flaws of emeralds concealed by lapidary skill,
Perfected in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam, transported
By the Spanish invaders to Seville, along with the clap.

> Directly they saw me, they stared, and stared again, with opera-glasses leveled at my **collier**. A whispered consultation took place, and I was summoned to the royal box. The King received me very coldly and asked me how I **dared** alter the family heirlooms.

I have a fever. You come into my bedroom carrying your
Black bag, "I never care for members of my own family."
"I know; but you do for me."
Seal me up; sew me up.
Button my lip; close my cup.
Leave me alone till I grow cold.

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Let no pencil pierce that fold,
That sheet, that skim of skin;
Nothing, no one will I allow in.
As Saran Wrap keeps the food in the bowl,
As the bag of membrane encases the foal,
As clenched teeth keep the tongue within,
So now will this, my virgin skin
Renewed, stretched taut by the surgeon's art:
Hymen's protection; Bonaparte.

> "What happened to my baby?" (to Walter Slezak, the German) You killed him, didn't you? He's in the sea, so big and terrible."

Sew the baby's shroud around her.
Reserve the box for the King and Queen.

> With Napoleon are associated the exploration of interior lines and central positions, economy in force by massing superior strength at the vital point; pinning down the enemy with a strategic advanced guard while manoevering with the rest of the army; preparing the attack by heavy artillery bombardments; and making decisive use of a powerful reserve kept intact during the earlier phase of a battle of attrition.
>
> *Places, People, Things and Ideas,* 1954

You come into my bedroom, carrying pastries, loops of custard
And caramel, serving my greed. I may die of consumption.

> 1. "Don't hurt that harmless little creature, Frederick; put it on the grass; don't pull so; it is cruel," said Anna to her brother, an interesting little boy about five years old.

It is beginning to rain at the Fair. Water falls from those
Curly clouds, now grey caracul. How fortunate I checked
The babies in the coatroom. Even though I am afraid I may
Mislay the stubs. We carefully wrap the pressed lamb sandwiches,
The Russian pork, the petits fours, and lettuce, lettuce,
Closing the wicker hamper. Water has failed; I have begun
To try food. A few people in the crowd are smoking
And we wonder if the rain has saved them from catching.
You smoke; I do not. The rain is changing to sleet,
Out of the linen closet, glazing the tents and ground,
Coating the sidewalks. Pigeons on the glass, alas, slide.
Only parsley still grows in the borders which, like
Rooming houses, separate Fair town from city. Parsley

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Survives the ice; I pick it as emblem, weave it into garlands
And gird you. Parsley green fire. Bright illumination.
Green curls twining with yours, green in brown hair.

> *One of the most efficient and certainly the most notorious of the soil binders is "quack grass" and its counterparts variously known as "Johnson grass," "witch grass," "couch grass" and other aliases. The evil reputation of this grass is due to the fact that it is extremely difficult to kill, because the long underground pieces may root at any point. The smaller the pieces into which the roots are chopped by the irate husbandman, the more widely and thoroughly the pest is scattered.*

How fortunate I checked the babies in the coatroom.
The spade. Their hands. Their feet.

> 4. To walk softly, the body should be bent and the things lifted; to walk in darkness, the hands are extended.

In my three rooms, three clauses, three closets, there is
A constant choice: the field, the sea, the blood.
They keep moving; move me: into the yard where
I measure the acreage of a field, blood flowers in
Its green waves; into the Red Sea which I cook,
Stirring it, seasoning to intensify the smell of mimosa;
Into blood which pulses with sea songs and closes
Its arteries in the season of lust. Do not forget
These are choices, I say to myself, watching the blood
Lap at the wicker cradles. Trim the wick if you want
The kerosene chair to work, if you want the execution
To be perfect. I look for the sentence
In the places I might have left it: the field, the sea,
The blood. But I cannot remember where. Nothing is distinct.
I must question the babies, looking into their grave faces.

> Mare Fecundatis (Lat.)—a dark plain in the 4th quadrant and extending into the first quadrant of the face of the moon. Also called: Sea of Fertility, Sea of Plenty.
>
> *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*

I chose the field, thick with daisies and Queen Anne's Lace
And mines. Mines which may be full of emeralds.

> *Almost anything that an animal can employ to make a sound is put to use. Drumming, created by beating the feet, is used by prairie hens, rabbits and mice; the head is banged by woodpeckers and certain other birds, the males of deathwatch beetles make a rapid ticking sound by percussion of a protuberance of the abdomen against the ground.*
>
> The Lives of a Cell
> *Lewis Thomas, 1971*

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It is time for a resting place, a place of nothing.
We are worn out, like screws turned overtime: we, you, I,
They, he, she are all worn out. But no place is nothing.
Even a platform is board. And right there you have one of
The greatest fears. Next to loneliness, singleness. Not
Singularity. That we wear proudly like a ruff of beard or
A red straw hat. You see *things* creep back in
(Snails into their houses). And around the platform,
Concrete now to avoid being board,
There should also be something. If it is sky we are forced
To deal with surrealism, and life is difficult enough without
Clouds as part of the art deco. Walls would be more comfortable
Because we are used to realism. But how can we cut out
Windows and doors, when we don't want them or when we do,
With a disjoined pair of scissors. That tiny screw
Wore out in 1934. We turn to our *Guide to Resting Places*
And find it tells us a platform has so many stories.
That won't do.
We turn to our map of Spas and find the watering holes
Are being used by the horses. They've been exhausted
And won't do.
We turn to the sextant and are told it will not give
Direction today, but we use it anyway because the moon
Has been violated and the sun is too excessive for a time
Afraid of emotion.
Only the constellations
May do. If we approach without gravity. Without weight.

> I wish it were incumbent upon us, as with the Jews, to enjoy a week in booths and tents at least once a year. Take off to the woodlot on your farm, or to the nearest place of the kind you can reach.
>
> *What A Woman of Forty-Five Ought To Know*

We turn to our *Guide to Resting Places.*
It directs us to the bull ring at Mysore.

So much the better (worse)	Tanto mejor (peor)
Thank goodness!	¡ Menos mal!
What a nuisance!	¡ Que fastido!
What a bore!	¡ Que aburrido!
How awful!	¡ Que barbaridad!
It doesn't matter.	No importa.
What's on?	¿ Que echan?
He is reliable.	Es muy formal.
He has the cheek of a devil.	Es una cara dura.
My goodness!	¡ Dios mio!

Collins Phrase Books: Spanish

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How to get rid of a bull in the herb garden:
Grab the brass ring in his nose. Use a spade to dig up the herbs.
How to get rid of stains on your doilies:
Pick a shade darker than the darkest stain and dye them.

How to get rid of a whorehouse in your building:
Call the block captain. Ask him to put aside his *Legos*
To investigate. Yes. The place was listed in Screw.
He will call the landlord. No. The tenant is a lawyer, not
A pimp. He moved in Xerox machines and calculators.
No offense. Next, the police. They can do nothing unless
A customer will press charges. But the customers are too busy
Screwing on the Xerox machines to undertake laundry.
Everything is ironclad. Get mothers with babies, and
Old ladies in wheelchairs to picket. A picket fence.
A rapier. Insufficient. Release the rats kept in
The basement. The chase will empty the house of its spayed
Cats. Now you have learned to get rid of pimples, look
Carefully at the Air Force. A more difficult target,
Alas. When they bombed Harlem, they said
They thought it was the Nevada Proving Ground.

Sustineo alas (Lat.)—I sustain wings.
Motto of the U.S. Air Force

"Scalpel." You are incising a baby. It was born
With double shoulder blades, like wings.

7. When it is impossible to use cannon I can supply in their stead catapults, mangonels, *trabocchi*, and other instruments of admirable efficiency not in general use—In short, as the occasion requires I can supply infinite means of attack and defense.

Each morning, my parsley glued in his curly brown hair
He dons his robes of office and goes there.
Boxed in by the formal walls he takes out his box of cures:
Hams, tobacco, herring, and decides which patients will get what.
Slice, roll, shred; slice, roll, shred: he makes his preparations.
Or plans his battles, mapping lines of strategy on their scalps, their stomachs,
Their breasts/chests. Where will the armies engage
On these hills of flesh? He consults his engagement book
But throws it in the basket when all it yields is a list of fiancées.
He consults the gardening manual, but its pages are full of parsley
And the office is already overgrown: walls, ceiling, carpet
Flocked with parsley.

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Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower –but if I could understand.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson
1869

Boxed in by the formal walls,
He reads his book on cells.

Ms. Wharton states his heart was jerking between two extremes of feeling. I think she is implying that his obligatory sense is being pulled two different ways. Unfortunately Ethan is not a strong man in will. His loyalty to Zeena and her damn sickness is stronger than his loyalty to himself. Zeena is not the one to succumb to her complications; Ethan is.

"Composition on *Ethan Frome,*" Scott Macdonald, 1975

Parsley seeding, multiplying.
This place will soon be a jungle of green.
He has looked for relief everywhere: Welfare, *bas*,
A young Erikson. There is none here; only escape into
The box within the box, closing the lid: his wife making dinner, his son
Shooting baskets, using an air rifle, his daughter, who notices,
Wondering, when he sits in the Barcalounger listening to
Bach, where he goes. Outside the box
Into the blood's magnetic field, the mine field where
The sky is emblazoned with fireworks bursting in air.
He wears his red biretta, emblazoned with parsley, as
He lectures on cardinal ordinance. Counting down:
Three, two, one. Outside the box. The mine field. Mine.

3. A general looks back when he stands up; other puppets look back only when they leave the stage.

Two elegantly slim silver-gilt angels hold up a casket surrounded by a crown, studded with rubies and emeralds. It is traditionally believed to contain the only relic left on earth by Jesus Christ. True, Christ ascended bodily into Heaven before the eyes of the astonished Apostles after his resurrection. But he had been circumcised in the temple as an infant and the Holy Foreskin, preserved by a succession of devout guardians, is said to have found its way eventually into the sanctum sanctorum of the Vatican.

Time Magazine, 1975

In the museum they are having an exhibition of the oceans.
Each floor contains its own and the wings contain
Seas, rising and falling like gulls, like our bodies.

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The children at the shore of the Aegean
Run naked, stuffing myths into their pails:
A woman is born a mermaid so her husband knows
She cannot run away once he lands her.
A woman is born a mermaid so she can swim,
Carrying plates of water vegetables and fish
To her father who stretches under a red-and-white-striped
Umbrella at the beach. A woman is born a mermaid
So that she will win only sack races,
And, once in a while, the egg and spoon.
A woman is born a mermaid so there will always be
Scales available for weighing flour and justice.
The mothers at the Aegan tend their children,
Stroking their bare bodies, admiring the contents
Of their pails. And the sun shines on them like brass.
It is the same on the floor containing the Antarctic
Except that it is dark and the waves have claws of
Ice, and the mermaids are part seal and the men part bear.
In the lobby, water laps at the marble pillars.
The sea is lapis lazuli. The tenants from the fifth floor
Are visiting the downstairs, sitting by the warm shore,
Holding their children in their laps.

In the museum, they are having an exhibition of the babies.
Their wings rise and fall with each breath.

ANGEL FOOD AND SUNSHINE CAKES

DEFECT: *Cakes Fall When In or Out of Oven*

1. Oven too hot.	1. Reduce temperature accordingly.
2. Egg whites whipped too much.	2. Reduce whipping time. Do not whip whites dry.
3. Too much liquid.	3. Do not add water to mixture.
4. Improperly cooled.	4. Invert cakes in pans on rack to cool.
5. Contamination	5. Check storage room for sources of contamination.

The Gold Cook Book
Louis P. DeGouey, 1935

It is too cool to swim; so the children make beads out of
Lapis lazuli, polishing the water with sand.

We are lying on sand at the beach, alone under a discus sun.
The Vs of our legs, seen from above, would make W.

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Your face seen from above, your open mouth.
My tongue. Your mouth sucking, swallowing.
The fugue of seagull cries drops guilt, blinding as a halo,
Between us. We are no longer gullible and should know better.
The sky coalesces into sunset and ignites.
When the sea catches your eye, a tear of fire forms
And spills into my hand where I hold it.
Waves, cymbals, crash appropriately.

There dwells a loved one
But cruel is she.
She left lonely forever
The kings of the sea.

"The Forsaken Merman"
Matthew Arnold, 1849

A woman is born a mermaid so she can picket
For the rights of both women and fish.

"Let your moderation be known to all," would be an excellent motto for women at forty-five and thereabouts. Be quiet and patient and, as a rule, all will be well.

Waves, cymbals clash appropriately.

She is changed.
Ring the changes. Ring the bells.
They peal, their round brass mouths
Tonguing the news. It is delicious
As grapefruit, as the bite of salt oranges.
She sits in a crewel chair in her waiting dress,
Green with appliques of iridescent turquoise,
Painting her eyes to match. Out of habit
She bats her lashes at him. Home run.
And in the belfry the bells cook the music of Martin Luther
As black shapes fly out like alphabets.
She knows she should check the babies. But she is
A lady-in-waiting. The bells rent the air.
Families rent apartments and open windows to
Expel the scent of citrus which hangs in the air
Like coal gas. An incendiary woman
Could sing a torch song and light up the city.

The word is out that the sky is not limitless; it is finite. It is, in truth, only a kind of local roof, a membrane under which we live, luminous but confusingly re-

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fractile when suffused with sunlight. We can sense its concave surface a few miles above our heads. We know that it is tough and thick enough so that when hard objects strike it from outside they burst into flame.

Ring the changes; let the clappers
Tongue the air until they flame.

If we do a widow sees an old story with new eyes he does what they do. It is a movement with a in between. What is a. A dog a call a having this *or* that. This may be as their sentence. A reapproach.

She sits in a crewel chair in her waiting dress
Cross-stitching "toujours l'amour" on a sampler.

2. "Cruel, Anna," said he, looking in her face with a queer and thoughtful expression—"cruel, cruel, Aunt Patty told me that pretty chair in her parlor was worked all over with cruel. Do you think I should be like the picture, or the chair, or what?"

They are serving the jugged hares on the holly-rimmed platter
At Christmas dinner. In the middle of the arguments
Which are shaking the silvered globes, Aunt Jean says,
"It's all relative." Yes, Father, Sister, Uncle, Mother,
Great Aunt, Cousin, Grandma, Brother. (Do two syllables signify
Opposition?) I am walking around the table, waiting,
With a handful of water and a handful of dressing:
Himself, myself, yourself, herself (two).
Self, self, put it on the shelf (one). That's the only way
To survive these Christmas courses. And yet I couldn't
Stay away completely, pining, playing solitaire at
The window on this day of expectation, sharp as
The prick of fresh needles on the tree.
I must go to the play pens to check the babies.

Why is an hour glass what they knew was a treasure as they went without their wanted as they knew as a tree at Christmas. It is a sentence as first to last that they had it in their out of their however power. They will not give it their permission.

The babies are all right. Pretending to write.
What else to do with a play pen?
Each is alone, rapt, except for the near-twins
Who are sibyls, able to tell what will hold
Water by stirring the cauldron. Syllables swim up
Through the salt broth, defining the rest if we could
Understand them. I return to the dining room; they are serving
The *Lutfisk*, lye-soaked Christmas Cod.

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> Get away from home as often as you can, it will do the family good to miss you, and they had better far be without you for a week or two occasionally, than to miss you for all time. Many a mother would be spared to her family were she to heed such advice as this and not go drudging along until tired nature demands the rest that never ends. Never mind what social functions are demanding your time; get away from them all; it is your duty, the other is not. Duties never conflict.

I couldn't stay away completely. Pining.
Ailing. Waiting for the bier.

> *All the great things of life are swiftly done,*
> *Creation, death and love, the double gate.*
> *We have to hurry at the touch of fate*
> *When death makes his arrest we have to go.*
>
> *Matthew Arnold*
> *"The Widow of Bye Street," 1912*

They are serving the Christmas cod in the dying room
As the vats of dye bubble emerald, parsley green,
Lapis lazuli, citrus yellow, red, white and blue.

> *Midnight came; the fireworks did not succeed, they were covered with a thick cloud; they cost sixteen thousand francs. At four o'clock in the morning Vatel went round and found everybody asleep. He met one of the underpurveyors, who had just come in with only two loads of fish. "What!" said he, "is this all?" "Yes, sir," said the man, not knowing that Vatel had dispatched other people to all the seaports around.*
>
> *Vatel waited for some time; the other purveyors did not arrive; his head grew distracted; he thought there was no more fish to be had. He flew to Gourville: "Sir," said he, "I cannot outlive this disgrace." Gourville laughed at him. Vatel, however, went to his apartment, and setting the hilt of his sword against the door, after two ineffectual attempts, succeeded in the third, in forcing the sword through his heart.*
>
> *Mme. de Sévigny*
> *Letter to her daughter, 1671*

We are resting, arresting probabilities.
We have stopped eating because the food burns our mouths.
We have stopped drinking because we cannot hold the water
In our hands. We have stopped dressing because
Our clothes may catch fire, may attract it, trap it,
The way a tree draws lightning. Dark, the room
Is getting dark, begetting it. We lie in bed and are not
Much more truthful out of it. We reach for each other
Even though we are losing our skin. Scurvy and
Dehydration, I guess. The holding on is
Painful, as the air is painful, and I do not think
I can let go. It is time
To look at the boxes. To check the babies.

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HORSE LIKE THE WIND

Fiction By Mary Peterson

MARY PETERSON is an old friend of the NAR. She lives in Maine with her lawyer husband, and has been teaching this year at Bradford College.

The horse has long bright legs and when he is washed all the neighborhood kids come to stand and watch.

Raymond wants to put his small hands into the pale thick mane.

Maria wants to use the rubber scraper that slicks the foamy soap away from the penny-dark body.

Carol wants to crawl up onto his back when he is dry, ride away over the railroad tracks.

Eleanor would like to comb his thick streaming tail all the way to his heels.

Sandra is so small she stands watching, thumb in mouth.

Watch out! Mr. Fredlund says. Back. Back. He can kick a long way, so fast you don't know it's coming. . .

They all move back from the crabapple tree where the horse stands tied, from the bucket of soapy water Mr. Fredlund dips into again and again to clean him.

The horse stomps his strong hind feet, sending a splatter of water from the ground where it lies in pools. Easy Boy! Mr. Fredlund says. He reaches for the bucket with the sponge, sends cascades of soapy water over the horse's withers and chest. In the sunlight prismatic light dances from the falling water, showers over the wetted grass. Maria looks but there is no rainbow.

He stands so tall they could walk under him without bending. His nose is so high to touch it you must reach up with a hand. The white blaze on his forehead is the color of bright white rabbits. When his eyes roll, the skin around them wrinkles and turns. And then back go his ears, listening to the whoosh of the water. Under Mr. Fredlund's strong hands the skin of the horse shudders and ripples, back, down. His coat darkens in the water. Water runs in streams down over his long white ankles, the pink and black shells of his hooves. He is a stallion. His genitals are dark grey black, tight, compact, important.

Maria wonders how horses breed. She remembers the cattle mounting one another in the auction barnyard. And isn't it so with horses?

His name is Golden Spike! Eleanor says aloud.

We know that already, says her brother.

They want to know why the horse is washed.

Mr. Fredlund doesn't answer. His horse shudders under the apple tree, big dark golden horse.

It's for the parade, Raymond says.

Yes. For the parade.

They watch him take the horse back across the highway to the barn, lifting its knees high, tossing its head back and forth, ears going flat then up again. Mr. Fredlund holds the rope tightly as if the horse would pull it from his hands, rear up like the horses on television and take him along into the air, although he is a big man. They listen to the clop of shod hooves on the tar pavement. The horse moves like he is dancing. Maria wonders that his feet touch the ground.

When he is out of sight around the barn they go to the water pooled up under the apple tree, making dark mud. They take off their shoes and splash into it, seriously at first, then laughing. Raymond makes a cup of his hand and sends a spray of water toward his sister, and she screams. I'll put your face in it, she says, I really will. He is already running away. He runs all the way toward home, along the highway, screaming words nobody can hear.

To widen the highway, construction workers have torn down trees, a good one pulled over with its roots standing up and its top branches cut away, a good tree for sitting.

Eleanor, who is oldest, sits on the highest branch. But there are enough branches for everyone.

From a distance they look like a gathering of dark little birds.

That's not how you get babies, Eleanor says. I know how.

And Raymond: Your daddy puts his thing inside your mommy.

I don't know *where?*

Girls have a hole for that.

No, Eleanor says. That's the way you get monster babies.

Everybody thinks: Is it true?

That's bad, Eleanor says. Nobody should do that. You get punished by having Siamese twins and babies with two heads.

Maria wonders.

I know I'm right, Eleanor says.

But Maria: I was only wondering how they do it.

Nobody should ever know, Eleanor says.

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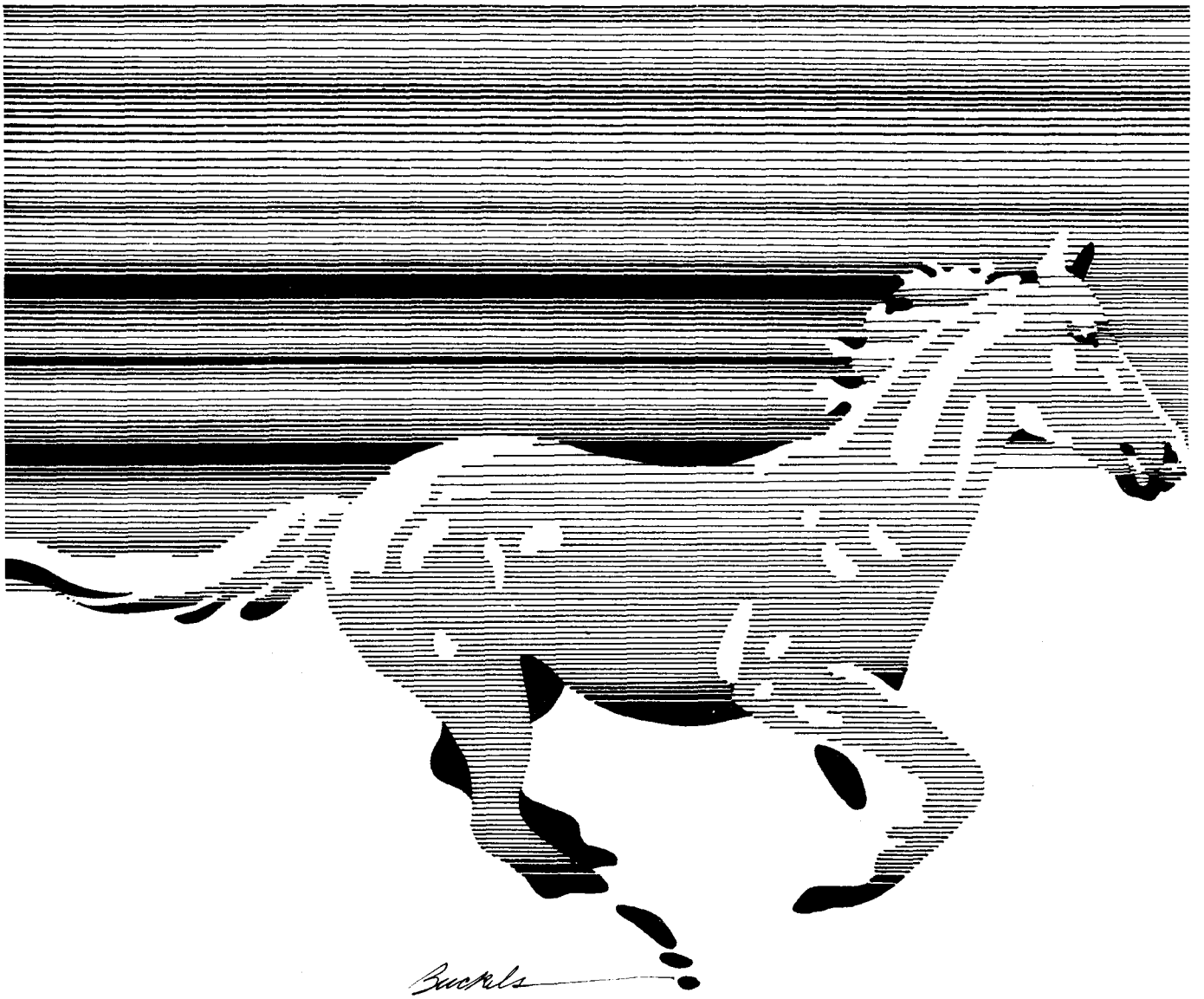

I didn't know there were monster babies.

That's because the doctors kill them and hide them away. Mothers don't like to remember.

But where are they buried, Maria asks. Where?

Not in cemeteries, Eleanor says. Not ever with regular people.

They don't like to think of it.

I know what *I* want, Maria says. I want a horse like Golden Spike, one like in the books. I want a horse like the wind.

No horse is like the wind, Eleanor says. Dummy.

A horse you can ride so fast its mane will fly up and blind your eyes, one you can ride like an Indian all bent down with your face against his neck.

I want one, Raymond says, you can ride in the parade.

Remember his silver? Carol says.

Maria thinks of it. Those are his bridle, saddle, and martingale, she says, proud she knows about horses. And more: A horse so fast that no matter how they wish, they can never catch you. One that runs and runs without getting tired. Even if they shoot arrows. Even guns. Nothing matters when you ride your fast horse, except people see you go by and they cheer, and you stand up on his back and wave good-bye.

Horses have to eat, Eleanor says.

Not my horse.

Horses have to have a place to sleep.

No, not this one, Maria says.

There's no horse like that, Eleanor says. You're silly.

Golden Spike might be a horse like that, Maria argues. He might be, but just now Mr. Fredlund is taking care of him.

Ride him then, Eleanor says, I dare you to.

But Maria knows if she rode him she would never come back. She gets down from her limb of the tree and walks away across the dirt.

Crybaby, Eleanor calls after her.

She stands under the apple tree watching light take its shape from the leaves.

At night, when the carnival is in town, Maria crawls out of bed and kneels at the window. She hears the crickets and night beetles in the grass under the box elder tree, in the garden. Over the houses she sees the yellow and green lights of the turning ferris wheel. She listens to the shouts and screams of people. They sound happy. One whole East part of sky is lit up from the carnival.

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Don't go there alone, her father said. These people are gypsies. They catch little girls and take them away.

When she was with him he showed her their scarlet trucks. They all leave in the night, he said. They drive away.

But when she asks what little girls they have stolen, he says no one knows.

In her mind she repaints the merry-go-round horses; they have silly round spots, such as no horse ever had. She makes some into pinto ponies. Some bay, with black manes. She paints their green and violet hooves black hoof-color. And she watches them go in their circles, a herd of wild horses.

She tells her mother she won't go to school, and is brought orange juice and ice cream in bed. Her mother checks her for a fever. She lies back on the pillow, so cool and white, and closes her eyes.

While she rests, her mother tells the story of her Uncle Kendall who rode wild horses nobody else could control. The chestnut one with the crazy eyes that could not walk but only prance. He even pranced in the field, her mother said. Danced sideways. That's called crow-stepping. He always led the parade.

She lies awake with her eyes closed, listening.

Her mother goes to the bureau drawer and gets the picture of her dead brother, Uncle Kendall. It has been colored and glued to a piece of wood, cut out like a part of a jigsaw puzzle. He sits on the brown horse, wearing a cowboy hat.

He was wonderful, her mother says. There was nobody like him. But he was so sick when he died. If he had lived you'd have a horse of your own.

Your bicycle's not a horse, Maria, Eleanor says.

Oh, yes it is, when I ride fast down the Church hill.

Your dog's not a horse, Carol says. Maria.

She *is*. She is when I tie the rope to her collar and make her pace in circles around me on the empty lot.

Raymond throws a stick at Maria where she sits on her branch. Remember the time Ellie fell out of the tree? he shouts.

You'd fall too, Eleanor says.

Raymond: It was the worms! Tent worms!

Raymond and Ellie live in a house with a huge porch and their mother has let them keep rabbits in it. Parent rabbits and baby rabbits, their hard round turds rolling along the edges of the walls, marbles. But their fur is so soft to touch. And when they eat the piece of lettuce their lower jaws make circles under the soft round whiteness of their split mouths; and when they eat the chunk of carrot they snatch it hard and clip it away with their teeth.

Rabbits are dirty, Maria's mother said. Rabbits on the porch!

The worm tree is in front of the house at the corner of the lawn. Ellie had forgotten about the worms and climbed up to the fat high fork. When she looked up the tent was above her, sheer and gauzy, and hanging from it on spun filaments were many curling worms, their bodies bent and reaching, acrobats. She screamed and fell right from the tree to the ground on her back.

The wind was knocked out of you, Raymond said.

She couldn't breathe for a long time, couldn't get air into her lungs, and her mother came running and carried her into the house. I thought you were a big girl, she said, she kept saying. I thought you knew better than this!

I don't want to go to school, Maria says.

Don't be silly.

I hate school.

Mrs. Gamble says you're doing very well.

Maria tells her mother yes she can read better than the other kids, and yes she always gets A on her drawings, but she doesn't want to go back to school ever again.

Well, if you don't go to school, what will you become when you grow up? her mother asks.

A trainer of horses.

Oh Maria, her mother says.

I remember when I was a baby, Maria says.

Nobody remembers that.

I do. I remember when you came to take me from my crib and wash me in the sink, and all the foamy water splashing in my ears. I'd cry and you'd put your hand under my head to keep it from the water. You'd tickle my stomach and I'd hold your finger.

You don't remember *that*, her mother says.

And when Grandma came you said once, This little girl thinks she'll drown . . .

The assignment is to write a report on what you like most to do in summertime. They are to write one page and illustrate it with crayon drawings. Maria sits near the window with her hands on the blank lined paper. She looks out the window at the first snow. The world is white. With the white crayon she draws a hillside on the paper. Then she takes the blue crayon and draws a house with a chimney. She makes the windows yellow and bright. She draws a coil of grey smoke from the chimney.

That's not a summer picture, Mrs. Gamble says.

Maria looks at the paper.

It's very pretty, dear, her teacher says. She puts a hand on her shoulder. But I wanted you to think about summer.

Maria looks out the window where the snow is falling.

Don't you remember how it was last summer? Mrs. Gamble says.

I remember the horse, Maria says finally.

Draw the horse then.

She shakes her head. You can't draw the horse, she says.

But you can draw anything you want.

When Mrs. Gamble leaves, Maria draws a room with an open door. Black lines on white paper. She fills the hole where the door is opened with layers of colors to look like a sunset. She wants to draw her dog running out through the door.

The assignment is to draw a picture of George Washington and to write under the picture, The Father of Our Country.

The assignment is to draw a picture of Santa Claus and his team of eight shining reindeer.

It's to write a little essay on the Indians.

To tell a story about Jesus.

To write a poem to your mother.

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Then the assignment is to tell why you're proud to be an American, and the decoration is to be flags.

You're a year older, her mother says, fixing the paper crown on her head. One year. You're a big girl now! Next year you'll blow out all the candles. You won't miss the last one again.

But I did that on purpose, Maria says.

Why?

It was for a wish.

I hope you wanted something small, that we can afford, her mother says.

I know what she wants! Raymond says.

Get your hands out of the cake.

I know what she wants too, Eleanor says.

When you're grown up you'll have different wishes, her mother says. When you're small you can wish for anything you like.

You can put your tooth under the pillow.

You can hang your stocking up for Christmas.

You can walk on the sidewalk missing all the cracks.

And, Maria says, if you jump rope counting to fifty you will get anything in the whole world!

To her mother at night Maria says, I want to walk to the path to David's cabin through the weeds. I want to pull the rusty chain with the ring at the end from the maple tree where it's grown into the branches. I want to sharpen knives on that old sharpening stone. To dig up things that are buried. To plant corn in the spring. To hide messages in bottles. I want to make a house in the lilac bush and not ever come out, even when Grandma has the family reunion and Uncle Donald and Uncle Harold play badminton on the lawn. To swim with the dog in the pond by the Lutheran Church. To crawl on Grandpa's sacks of beans that go all the way up the tree where we've nailed steps of pieces of wood. To feed flies to the black spider all summer.

And I want to crawl into the underground fort that Raymond made. And I want to make pies and sauce from the apples in Grandma's back yard.

Is that all? her mother asks.

No. I want more than that. I want to be an Angel in the Christmas play and wear tinsel on my head. I also want for my dog to be a horse and for my bike to be a horse too.

You don't need two horses, her mother says.

Maria says: I don't want to count my horses. There might be many or there might be only one. I can never decide what color they should be.

You can have some things you want, her mother says, but not everything.

Why? Maria asks.

You'll understand when you're older.

I don't want to get older.

You'll learn in school.

I'm not going back to school.

Not even for the Easter party? her mother asks.

Well, maybe for that.

What's your name? Eleanor asks her.

Maria.

What's your *name?*

I told you: Maria.

Is that what you'll say when the gypsies catch you? Eleanor asks her, laughing.

I'll tell them my name and my address and they'll bring me home again.

Oh no, they won't, Raymond says. They never bring you home.

Who told you that?

Everybody knows.

There are bad gypsies and there are good ones, Maria says. The ones I'll meet will be only good ones. We'll have tea parties together and when I want to go home they'll take me.

Three days will pass, Eleanor says, and everybody will wonder, Where's Maria? And everybody will know the gypsies got her, but they won't know where she's gone. And they won't be able to find her because gypsies leave no tracks when they go away.

My dog will find me, Maria says. She'll track me with her nose. She's a hunting dog and knows about things like that.

It will be so far, Eleanor says, she won't be able to find you.

She's a good hunting dog.

It doesn't matter.

Even if it's far away as the moon, Maria says, they'll find me. I'll tell them where I am.

In her sleep she rides a horse with wings, not Golden Spike but a white horse that leaps and whinnies like the dappled one in her book. When she wakes and looks at the stars through the window, she thinks of the story Eleanor told about the tall dark man with a black cap who walks through town at night looking for little girls. She thinks of the stories of ghosts and witches. She thinks of the ways you can protect yourself against evil spirits—collecting wild herbs is one, and putting them into a bottle, and burying it in the ground in a secret place. The place she imagines is under the rose bush where the petals fall at the end of summer. She thinks to put rose petals into the bottle too, and she'll be the only person in the world remembering their smell once they're under the ground. But you can remember a smell, she knows you can. Just as you can remember things you've touched. Your fingers remember how the tree trunk felt and the way the horse's mane was coarse and thick. Your nose remembers the lilacs and the roses. She thinks it would be a good way to keep yourself safe. That she might tell her mother about it; that she might not. Only certain people would understand. Mrs. Gamble at school certainly did not understand. Eleanor did not understand either. Raymond would know if she could get him alone and explain to him. Carol would know too; she was the one who wanted to ride the horse. Maybe into the bottle she would put all their names, even the names of people who didn't understand. The charm would work. The paper with their names written on it would begin to smell like roses and dirt, it would be a magic spell. Then when she was an old, old woman she could know just where it was and dig it up again, and remember everything. □

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THE 4-MINUTE SHORT STORY

T. Coraghessan Boyle
M. Kimberly Calvillo
Robert Fox
Catherine Gammon
Edward Hirsch
Charlotte Walker Méndez
Jayne Anne Phillips
Lenora K. Rogers
Naomi Rothberg

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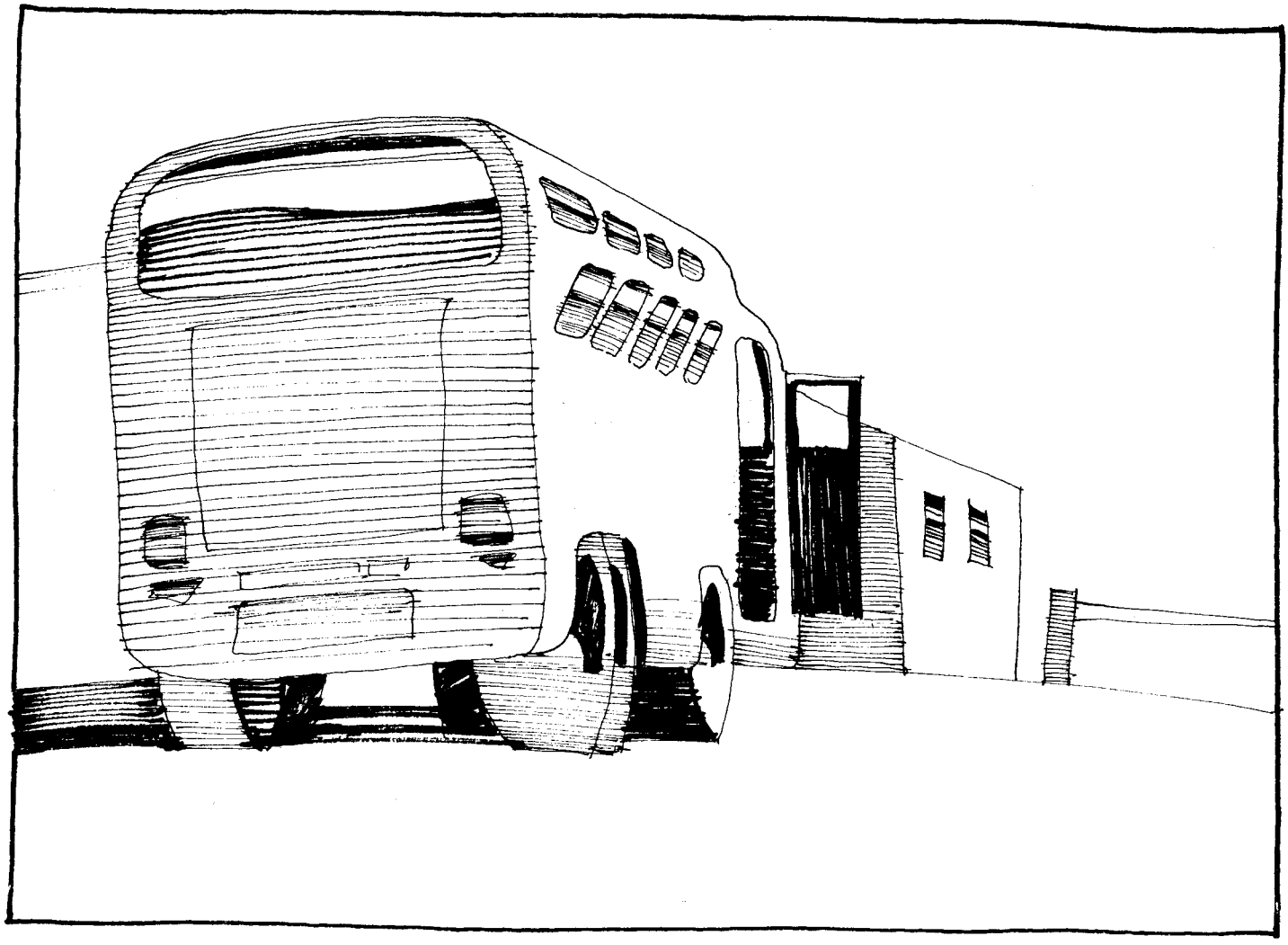

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CROSSINGS

By T. Coraghessan Boyle

for Julio Cortázar

On the second page the girl was murdered. Kelius read on. The murderer, as yet faceless, spread a plastic dropcloth over the tiles in the kitchen and drew a surgeon's hacksaw from the lining of his overcoat. He began to dismember the body. In detail. Kelius was sickened, recalled to himself that it was only fiction, and read on, oblivious to the jolting of the bus. The murderer wedged the torso into a suitcase, arranged the limbs around it, packed tight, before the stiffness began to set in. It was 4:51. The girl's father was due home at 5:00. Even now he was out in the street, striding along in the welter of heads and shoulders, handbags and briefcases. Kelius watched the glow of the kitchen clock as the murderer hurried to hide his traces. Suddenly the bus was stopping. Kelius looked up and his stomach clenched—they were at the border already. Half a page left in the chapter. His eyes rushed down the ranks of columns and letters. The murderer was rinsing his dropcloth in the shower, water running red against the porcelain. Then he rolled it up, jammed it into the suitcase, dropped the twin latches, hefted his burden and slipped out the door. "Señor." It was the bus driver. "Es hora de bajar. Hemos llegado a la frontera." Kelius did not speak the language, but understood the gestures. He reluctantly folded back the page, tucked the book under his arm, and stepped out into the sun.

There were men in uniforms with mustaches and automatic weapons. A gate, a little brick building, two jeeps, a truck, an old Ford. Kelius could make out the river off to his right, a metallic glint caught in the tentacles of the cactus. He followed the others into the building.

It was absurd, he knew, but every time he went through this he felt that something would go wrong, that they'd somehow detain him, refuse to let him pass the border. He never dealt in contraband, and gladly paid duty on the things he brought back to sell in his tourist shop. And he had money. Still, he thought of the uniforms, the strange harsh language and arcane laws, the implacable yellow faces of the men with the guns.

Inside he showed his passport. The man behind the desk made a notation in his ledger and stamped the document. "Pase por la puerta allá," he said, indicating a door at the far end of the room. Kelius followed the finger, beginning to sweat under the arm where he'd tucked the book.

The door opened into a larger room with a long table. The other passengers were there. They were spreading their luggage on the table for the benefit of the inspectors. Kelius observed that the inspectors wore uniforms identical to those worn by the men outside. They were young and relentless. They neither smiled, nor spoke. They pointed, poked, sifted, rattled. Kelius waited his turn. He rested a foot on one of his bags, the silver *K* like a mirror, then opened the book and resumed his reading. The story rushed back on him. He saw the girl's father standing at the elevator, watching the numbers descend. And then the murderer brushing by him as the doors parted. The irony. The father stepped into the elevator and the doors closed on him like the shutter of a lens. At the same moment the murderer hurried through the front door, down the steps and into the street. His gait was awkward, the suitcase tugging at his arm. Up the street, the bus. He hailed it. "Señor." Kelius looked up. His suitcase was on the table. The inspector motioned for him to open it. It was then that he became aware of the flies, then that the blood rushed to his bowels, then that he tripped the twin latches and pulled back the lid of the suitcase, stamped with flashing *K* and packed tight with the stiff, wet, hacked and already decomposing flesh of a young girl. □

T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE is finishing up his Ph.D. at Iowa. He has put together two books of short stories, either or both of which may be published momentarily.

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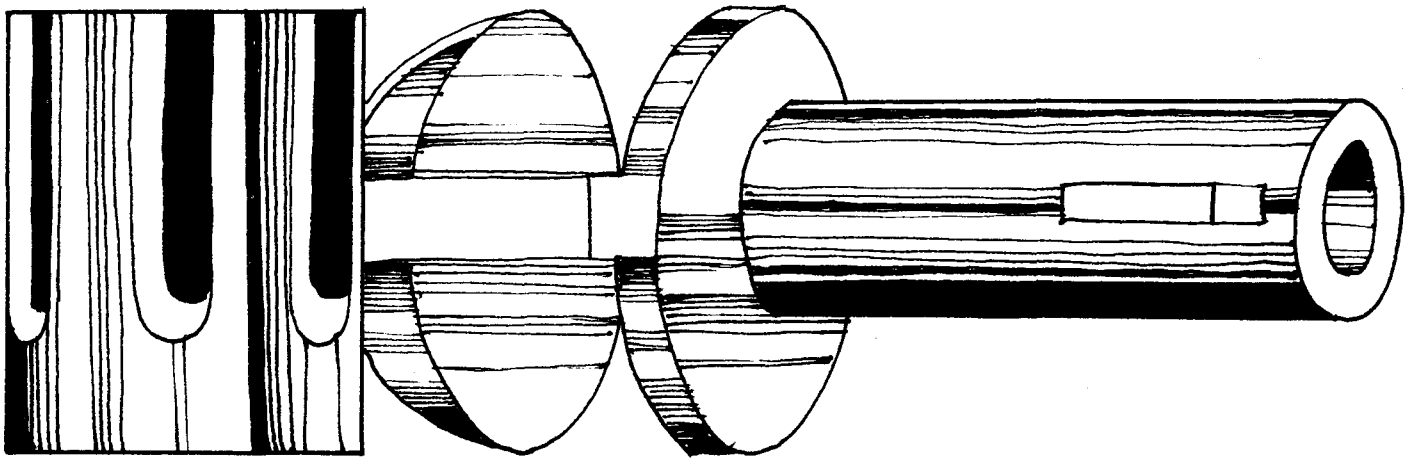

HOWARD

By M. Kimberly Calvillo

1. The Setting

It was still raining by the time Howard finished his second cheeseburger. Note the name of the roadside drive-in: STELLA'S SUPERBURGERS. And a frothy milkshake blinking neon lemon, neon lime. A couple in the next car is necking, but Howard turns on his windshield wipers and drops ketchup on the seatcover between his legs. The Conoco station next door advertises a lube and oil change for ten dollars. Howard considers ordering more french fries as a car hop hurries across his windshield.

A town in Nebraska, then, almost to the Colorado border. Spitting distance from the foothills of the Rockies. The boondocks. It's an early spring evening, chilly, and most of the cars bound for the ski resorts are turning south to Mexico. Howard honks his horn for more french fries. The car hop splashes a soggy package at him and takes the money with a pimply smile. Howard shivers. He's been waiting since noon. The gun is loaded, just out of reach inside the glove compartment.

2. About the Gun

Howard is afraid of guns. He cannot say at what moment in time they became frightful to him, but he is afraid. It might have been the time he watched his buddy Junior Walker get turned into a puree during the Tet Offensive. At least it had been the gooks, and not the village children wired with dynamite.

Guns, this gun in particular, are a source of embarrassment to him. This one might have belonged to John Wayne. It is obscenely flashy. And heavy. Maybe he would use two hands. He would have preferred a magnum. A Luger. At least his trusty M-16. Her doing, he muses. One more of her little pranks.

3. The Characters: Howard

He wants to remain anonymous. He eats alone, usually, and likes it. He is not easily befriended. Mostly he is contradictions.

a. About Contradictions

Nearly every American family has one; you know, *that* one. Never satisfied. They begin like normal children, but somehow they become easily out of sorts. Easily afraid, with monsters lurking under their beds. They seldom listen when spoken to, and nearly always hear what is left unsaid. They start living in houses, then discover they prefer comic books. And television. They understand the future of lives lived on baseball cards and commercials for breakfast cereal.

b. About Recollections

He is nine years old and sitting in the tire swing. He eats jelly out of a paper cup. Grape jelly. If he eats enough of it, all his teeth will fall out. His mother's prediction. He wants teeth that can be taken out at night and put into a jar of water. Like Gramps'.

He starts pumping. Hard. He is almost touching the sun when Bubba Nelson crashes down on him from out of the tree house. Bubba hits people. Likes to make them cry. This time it doesn't happen the way Bubba likes. The jelly starts turning an urgent red flavor in his mouth. And two of his milky teeth lie like shells beside Bubba's brand new PF Fliers.

He is sweating on the road to Saigon. He has been counting gook bodies for six months and has seen them in every pose of death. Like rows of dominos; he plays games with them, stacking them neatly. He plays skillfully, concentrating on their every move to make sure they do not cheat. He is honest. He plays well. He wins. He collects points like garbage. He is polite and never boasts. He offers gook buddies/bodies Winston filter kings. They always refuse. He keeps up his end of a lively conversation with them. They are shy.

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4. The Characters: Who She Might Be

She is a refugee from his frozen passions. She has fled. She is at large. He intends to apprehend her. She is nothing. She is everything. She has given him his tragic past, though often she wishes it otherwise.

They met in the beginning: lovers of wine and Whitman, poets of promise come to wed their charity. She tended mostly to the crossword puzzles of their conversations. She washed his socks and his sins. And as days went into days, she did not ask him so much for love as he might have wished her to.

They had babies. First. Second. And third while he was in the V.A. hospital psych-ward. She did not round home. They struck out.

He was her best, the finest focus. He was like religion, her love a belief. She could touch him, but he was gone. They were together, but she was alone.

Sometime later she took a job in a grocery store. Then as a secretary. Then a salesgirl in ready-to-wear. One day she wised up and learned something from the clothing business: Less is more. Now she is an exotic dancer. The money is right and she can be at home during the day with her children.

5. The Problem

Howard said it was a question of control. No, she said, necessity. Her freedom is an embarrassment to him. But that is not the worst. She could survive without him, as she survived the criticism of her friends. The worst is that he did not leave her alone entirely.

She robbed him blind. Took his imagination and his energy. She damaged what she could not take away—his favorite dreams, secrets, and wishes. She kept what he values most, what he hid in closets and dressers and in the pockets of his Nam fatigues. His Nam fatigues. He refused to take them off. Except for bathing. He would not let her wash them. He wanted to watch them rot off his body. She will not accept responsibility for his condition. All of this is his doing. But she still tries to win him back. Every day she offers him wealth, power, destiny. Does he have eyes for someone else? She sits before him, asking "What is it? What do you want?" She thinks he wants to see her suffer.

Grimly, she suffers as she chooses. Even when he is out of sight, he monopolizes her attention. From time to time, he vanishes from the house completely. She imagines illness overtaking him. Gruesome automobile carnage. Fires. Poison.

When he comes back, sometimes there is a strange car parked in his driveway. He imagines her with another man. He has searched her purse and found matchbooks with phone numbers scribbled adulterously on the inside covers. This is the final straw. She is lost to him, like all the rest. It is about this time he begins thinking about the gun.

M. KIMBERLY CALVILLO is a Northern Iowa graduate from Sioux City. This is her first published story.

6. The Collision

Howard sits finishing his french fries. He begins to fix certain details in his mind. The rain. The battered Chevy station wagon that matches the color of his eyes. He drifts off into the memory of when he first bought the car. He took along one of her small eye make-up mirrors and placed it on the hood of each blue car he came to on the lot. Looking into the mirror, he compared his eye color to the paint on the hood. He had to get it just right.

He sees the couple in the next car are still going at it. He thinks about the double bed in his room at home. His room. Her room. He always liked to think of it as a refuge. He liked the idea of hiding in her. Until she started using it as a weapon. They seemed to be using weapons more and more. Now they had escalated to the ultimate weapon.

He wishes she would hurry. She was supposed to get off work hours ago. He deliberately parked the car across the street, away from the bar, so she would have to look for him. So she would have to worry. He has something he wants to tell her. It is about a dream he had. In his dream, he is walking up the back porch steps into their house. Suddenly, she runs up behind him, pink and breathless, clutching a bag of groceries and a baby. Her baby. His baby. She says to him, "Oh, I've got to tell you about the cab driver. He laid me right here"—indicating the 4′x4′ area of the back porch on which they are standing. His oldest brother comes out of the house at that instant and chides her. "You have to tell Howie everything?" She is silenced by this rebuke and follows him into the kitchen, leaving Howard alone.

He awoke, blistered with the oddest sort of jealousy. In two distinct but indistinguishable shocks of jealousy, he wanted her to make love to him there or to tell him how it had been with the cab driver.

She is coming across the street now. He sees her waiting for the traffic light, her brown gabardine raincoat pulled like a beacon around her bare thighs and cleavage. He wonders how many men have that view of her, too. She is not a gaudy woman, he concedes, but her crimes do not belong. She is walking closer now. She sees his blue-eyed car and waves. Her face is tired. The rain should soften the worry lines on her forehead but he sees them clearly as she opens the car door. Before she has a chance to greet him, he raises John Wayne's gun and fires.

7. Resolution

His obituary made the front page. War Veteran. Purple Heart. Silver Star. She sat with his casket and the American flag. His parents refused to speak with her, except in the most stilted formalities. His passed-over girl friends appeared, claws sheathed out of respect for the dead, but still willing to snarl. His friends offered sympathy laced with sexual innuendo.

She did her weeping alone and out of camera range. Her children were at once placid and confused. They did not ask her impossible questions. □

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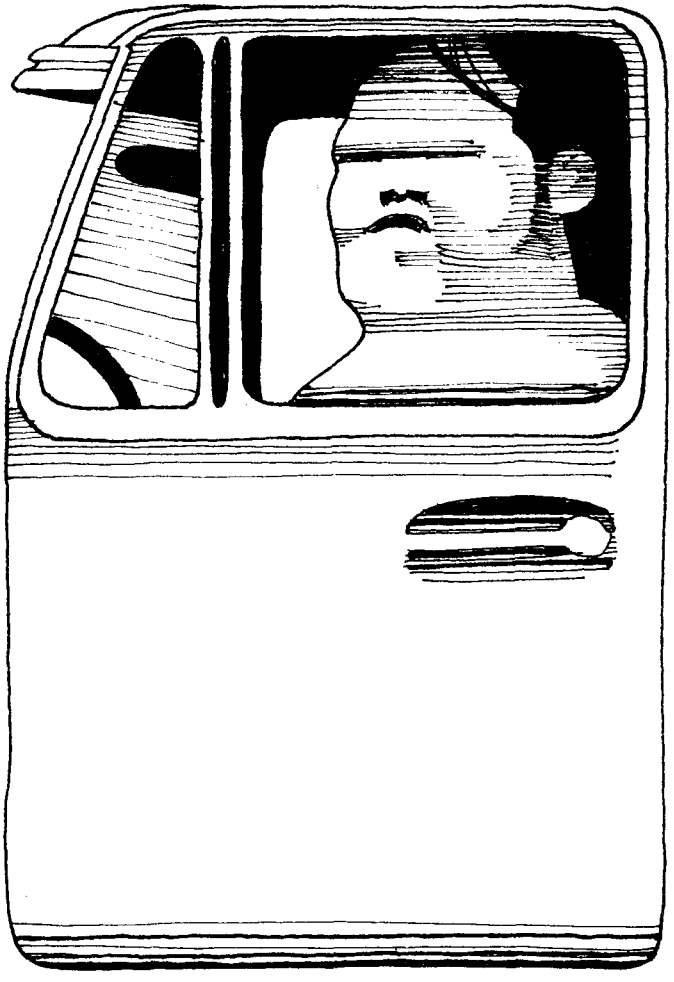
ROBERT FOX lives and writes in Ohio. A collection of his stories—including this one—is soon to be available through December Press.

FRITO AND THE FAT MAN

By Robert Fox

He was the biggest man anyone had ever seen outside of the circus. It was a wonder he could get around, work, fit behind the wheel. In fact, standing next to his GMC fenderside, he made the truck look like a sportscar, or himself a creature dropped into the wrong age, one that was too late for his size and strength, and where things were scaled down a bit too small.

Frito met him at the Gulf station. It was generally hospitable there. Tom Cory, the proprietor, let Frito use the grease rack and tools for free because he and Rhonda bought gas there two and sometimes three times a week. Local policemen, who sometimes came in to exchange sealed white envelopes with Cory, eyed Frito suspiciously, sweat dripping from his mustache, banging around under his old and colorful station wagon (which he had brush painted), but they never said anything.



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Frito joked around with the boys who called him Frito Bandito, and then just Frito, and that was how he got the name. He suggested inventing tools that were impossible combinations of other tools, such as vise grips and torque wrench, or he gave them detailed instructions on how they could supercharge their ignitions with transistors or vacuum tubes if they didn't trust transistors and had a lot of space under the hood, and were willing to put up with a lot of smashed tubes.

He met the Fat Man when he went to install helper springs on the rear axle. His station wagon was loaded with parts from three round oak tables that Rhonda hoped to make into one, a handtruck that was supposed to help them during their numerous moves, and other assorted junk they had no place to store. The Fat Man sat down between the lift and the office after Frito raised the car. He sat there with a red and black Woolworth guitar that looked like less than a ukelele next to his body. He looked at Frito and began to sing *Okie From Muskogee*. Frito had to pass him to get to the tool bench and the Fat Man glared at Frito with his green eyes.

Frito smiled and said, "Excuse me."

"You need a haircut on your face," the Fat Man said.

"You got a nice voice," Frito said, and went around the other side of the car. After he got the tools he needed, he noticed that the Fat Man had shifted his knees, and he was able to pass. The Fat Man was singing another song, a nostalgic Hank Williams tune, as if trying to summon up once again those good times of his adolescence during the Korean War. He didn't look up as Frito passed.

Outside, the Fat Man's bright red truck was having a pair of fat whitewalls with raised letters mounted on his super wide chrome rims. The truck was a special model, covered with chrome trim, a row of lights across the top of the cab, and amber fog lights over the front bumper. Frito stepped outside to get a Coke from the machine and saw two shrunken heads dangling inside the cab. The rear window was covered with stickers that said Valvoline, Holly carbs, STP, Monroe; and of course there were American flags, one "Honor Thy Country," and one "America, Love It or Leave It."

Frito went back in with his Coke. The Fat Man had stopped singing. He still held the guitar on his lap and glared at Frito with his green eyes. What further violation was Frito about to perform?

I'd better not breathe next to it, Frito thought. I'd better not let my drool fall anywhere near it, he thought.

"Does your truck have sealed universals?" Frito asked.

"She's. Got. Ever'thing," the Fat Man said.

Frito started to ask if she was a good fuck but luckily his mouth turned it into a question about power steering.

"She don't need it buddy because she will outsteer and hold the road better than your Commie Kazi Sportshit that looks about to crumble off the rack."

"Oh," Frito said and went back to work on his car, trying to think of his suspension in terms of metaphysics. Such ruminations made the work go faster, and also endowed all past, present, and future journeys with a meaning and purpose which otherwise were only his and Rhonda's tentative rationalizations.

The Fat Man got up and went outside, to make sure the boy didn't nick a fender with the lug wrench.

Thereafter, Frito noticed the truck at the Gulf Station late in the afternoon, getting cleansed of red clay dust, and not long after, discovered what the Fat Man did for a living. It was when some friends insisted they meet for lunch at the McDonald's that had just opened where the bypass was being constructed. Rhonda had just put ketchup and salt on a napkin and was eating it in protest of the food. Frito hurriedly drank a glass of milk and went outside to observe the progress of the construction. He stepped from the chrome, air conditioned fluorescence into a sultry afternoon that was filled with red dust. Dump trucks poured load after load of clay building a ramp for the overpass, and in between loads the two bulldozers rode back and forth on the ramp, tamping it down and grading it. Frito was sitting on the fender of his car, squinting into the bright sky when he noticed one of the dozer drivers waving. It was the Fat Man. Frito looked around and saw no one but himself the Fat Man could be waving to. He was covered with red dust that stuck to his skin. His tee shirt came only halfway down over his huge stomach which bounced as if struggling to free itself from the rest of his body. Frito smiled and waved back and the Fat Man responded by shifting the dozer into a higher range, racing back and forth on the ramp now, the huge engine whining, waving at each pass.

Then Frito went back inside to where Rhonda was washing down her napkin with a milkshake. Frito wondered out loud if her turds would be flammable, and then they left. Frito drove slowly past the construction, and the Fat Man came by again, waving down at Frito's car, not taking his eyes off it, looking for a moment as if he was about to send the huge machine shooting off the ramp, crashing down onto the road. When he got close, you could see his navel: a big black hole in the red colored belly.

"Who's that?" Rhonda said.

"That's my friend from the Gulf station," Frito said.

Numerous stickers were added to the windows of the Fat Man's truck, assorted nicknacks stuck to the dash. The name "Jimmy" in quotes was painted just above the grille, just below a huge chrome hood ornament. The name was painted backwards so it would read correctly in your rear view mirror.

Whenever Frito saw the Fat Man in town, the Fat Man ignored him. He even ignored Frito when his truck was being hosed down afternoons at the Gulf station. He ignored Frito in the early evenings when he waited inside the cab, the steering wheel pressing into his stomach, scrubbed of the red dust and waiting outside a bar for country women, hair piled high and tumbling over their shoulders. But when Frito passed the construction site, the Fat Man would wave from his huge machine as if he and Frito were best of friends.

Then government money was cut off, half the bypass was paved and the rest never completed. The Fat Man and his fancy truck never appeared again for its afternoon cleansing, and Frito never again saw the Fat Man lounging behind the wheel outside the bars in the cool early evenings.

Frito wonders if he has found a dozer to drive elsewhere, if the bypass funds would ever be restored bringing the Fat Man back to grade the missing ramp on the other side of the road, or was the Fat Man now to be permanently unemployed, to melt away behind the wheel of his "Jimmy" spelled backwards that was now scarred and faded on its journey into the ground.

In the meanwhile the McDonald's thrives. □

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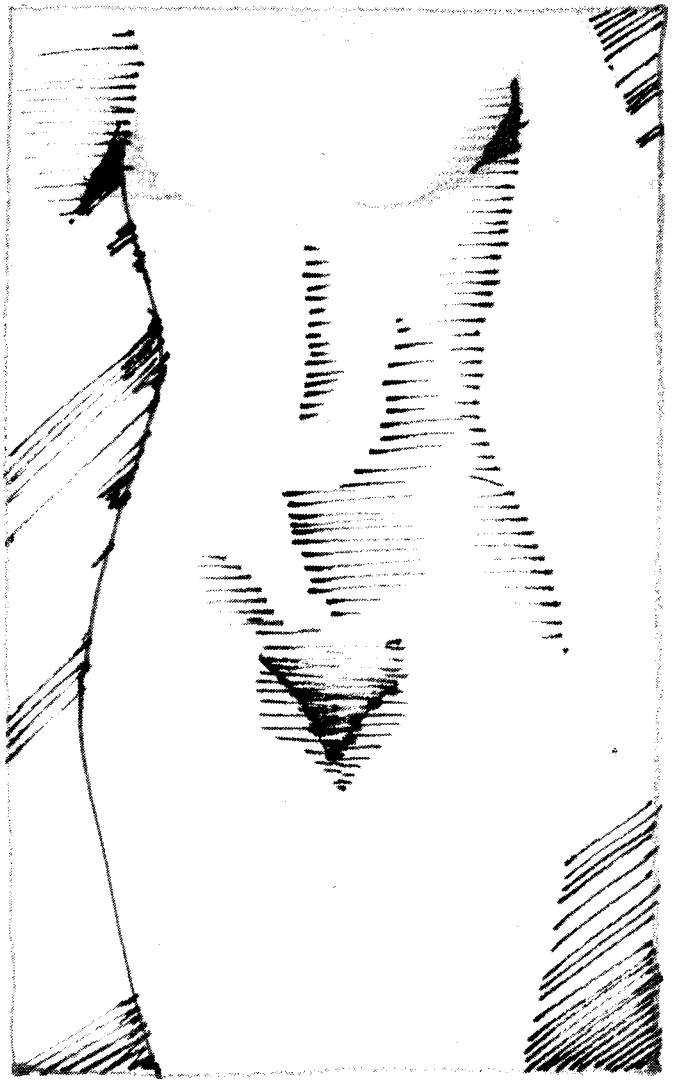

SKINFLICK

By Catherine Gammon

You're sick. I love your sickness. Your sickness serves my need to lacerate myself. That's sick. I'm sick.

You taught me a kind of goodness I hadn't known before. That goodness adds to your power to destroy me.

You taught me to love you by loving me. Whenever you love me, you retreat. Just in time. To trap me in my lacerations.

We're a perfect match.

Are you single tonight? I said to him.

He grinned. Perfect teeth. I'm always single, he said, why?

Well . . . , I said, suddenly uncertain of my ability to deliver. Well, I said, I was thinking of a one night stand.

After the show?

Yeah, I said, smiling, silly, cocking my head.

His eyes danced. Playful. Sure, he said. Why not?

It's over a year, more than a year that I've had the scar. Or just a year. Close to a year. And almost a year since I vowed—vowed not to you, to myself, not even to myself, be honest now, to God, to God whom I discovered in making the vow—almost a year since I vowed by my burned flesh, by the scar of the self-inflicted blister, the cigarette burn self-given to concentrate the pain of sex unreturned, made to symbolize, later—a blue dark December day, Haydn in the background, in the vow—love, returned or not, love, love to be kept with the secrecy of unlived sex. And nine months, nine months, plus or

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minus, since last I broke the vow. I tried. Once twice thrice. Stopped trying. Breaking the vow was harder than keeping it, something I couldn't have known, couldn't have guessed. And now.

Beast, I cry. From time to time. Playfully. When feeling good. But your satiation grows, engenders my frustration, until the time, night or morning, sometimes day, maybe over coffee, could be wine, the telephone. You need your freedom again. You can't speak the truth. Your brow reveals your hiddenness. But your retreat comes too late.

This time, I tell myself, this time . . . ! I pound my boot against the floor, whirl, search for something to break.

No.

No more breaking. It seemed we were done with this, I was done with it. But no.

Then maybe the other way, the old way. Maybe I can salvage that sense of . . . , my own sense of . . . .

You're sure you want to do this? he asks.

I shrug.

I thought you were . . . .

I shrug again. Whispering to myself: overcome, overpower, don't let me retreat, don't let me back off or change my mind, free me from my own folly, my willful deviation from the normal promiscuity, make me want this, with my body, overcome my mind, free desire from the cell I've built for it.

Hey . . . , he says.

I stare at him. Tears rise. I can't help it. Dear God, I whisper, bite my upper lip. I shake my head, shrug.

How about we go for a drink?

That won't help, I say.

Before I went tonight, I put on my whore's necklace. I never told you about that necklace. You've seen it. You like it. You don't know why I stopped wearing it. I never told you how I earned it. If I run across you tonight, out on the streets, I'm going to smirk and smile and grind my teeth and say as if it didn't matter that I love you, "Ain't freedom grand?"

It jingles between my breasts, cloaked in blue satin. Heavy it hangs from my neck. Old silver, blue beads embedded in a strange grey glue, bits of purplish glass, crescent shaped, and dangling dangling silver. Fat eights, infinity shaped, flat. Round beads, bells, bells without chimes. I feel the weight at the back of my neck. The pressure tells me, again and again.

There's a story behind it, I said at one time to a woman at a party who found it fascinating.

Oh? Tell me.

No. It's a story I'll never tell.

But perhaps it's time to tell it. And perhaps not. The necklace is heavy and means my anger and my desire to reclaim . . . . The story of it is not necessary.

Someday, though, you'll beg to hear it, and someday, drunk, unthinking, I'll tell it. And it won't be meant to matter but it will, it will matter in the end, a small thing, a thing of the past, a thing without meaning, but for that reason, for that reason alone, it will rise and stand up and shout out to you and you'll go again then if you haven't already gone and you'll make it be my error again as you've always made it be my error when the only error is your inability to live love. And mine. □

CATHERINE GAMMON is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and has moved to Berkeley where she is working on a novel. This is her first published fiction.

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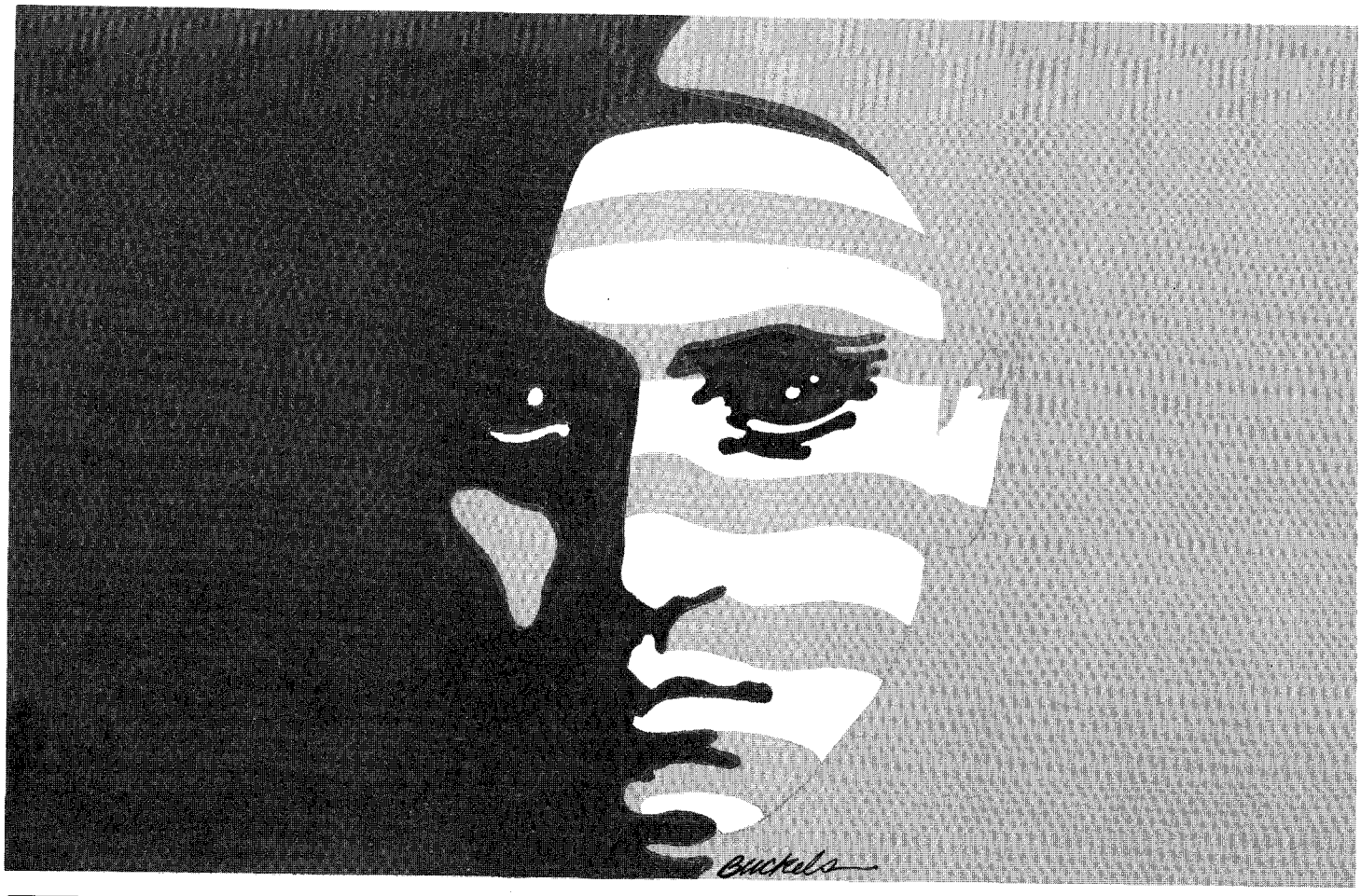

ZEBRAS

By Edward Hirsch

Think of the sky as a barren desert with a sparse wind rustling through dead grass and the last clouds beaten down into colorless vapors and then hoisted back up as flags, or as the pock marked fowls of desolate hunters. It's a Sunday afternoon in late August, 1957, and, despite the fact that the day has progressed like a series of long blasts from the furnace, you're still at the zoo with your parents. You've been here since early morning. In fact, the day has gone on for so long that the last cactus have already wilted, the wolves have given up howling, and the wind has lain down in the grass like a broken king, although the sun, the belligerent summer sun, keeps flaming and flaming and flaming up in the sky like a toothache or a heart attack, like something interminable going on inside of you. It won't stop and finally, out of some final boredom, you begin to attend to things. By now you've noticed that the sidewalks aren't white as you'd first thought, but a deep calloused yellow, and the immaculate stone buildings are blemished and stained with colors. For some reason this makes you, well, almost happy, so happy that soon you've discovered all the cages with faded iron bars and the doors which haven't been painted. The vendor's umbrella is hardly a rainbow and the walls in the washroom are scarred with strange writing. Perhaps you can't understand all the words yet, but you know they don't belong there. You'd like to memorize the sayings. And later when you run up to ask your father for a dime you decide not to blurt one out, you notice that his hands are bloated and sweating. The sleeves of his shirt are frayed. His collar is dirty. He digs deep down into the cave of his pocket and somehow you already know that the coin he'll find will be thin as paper, yes, and it will be blurred and worn down from traveling.

Once, to test them, you put your hands inside a vicious cage, but all day your parents have been quarreling and quarreling and by now they've given up any pretense of watching you. Not that it matters much since the animals are all too listless to move anyway. The lions no longer even bother to swat away the flies, and the last squirrels have stopped chasing each other in the feeder. The monkeys have actually given up mocking you and gone back to sleep, and the giraffes have finally taken their heads out of the treetops. And still the dull rancor of your parents' voices keeps intertwining like rope, driving you away and then, like an undertow, pulling you backwards; snapping your backside and then, after you've moved back into the sun, circling like buzzards and snaring you.

You keep gravitating back to the zebras. What intrigues you about them is that they don't seem to do anything. They simply stand there and remain striped. Like ribs of light. Like a rainbow without colors. Like convicts standing in barred windows, and waiting. The zebras don't have the agility of tigers and they can't fall with the clumsy gracefulness of gorillas. They refuse to quarrel in small feeders, or to tumble out of swings like acrobats, or even to grow tall enough to

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EDWARD HIRSCH has published a variety of poems and stories in Antioch Review, Poetry Northwest, *and* Paris Review. *He lives in Philadelphia.*

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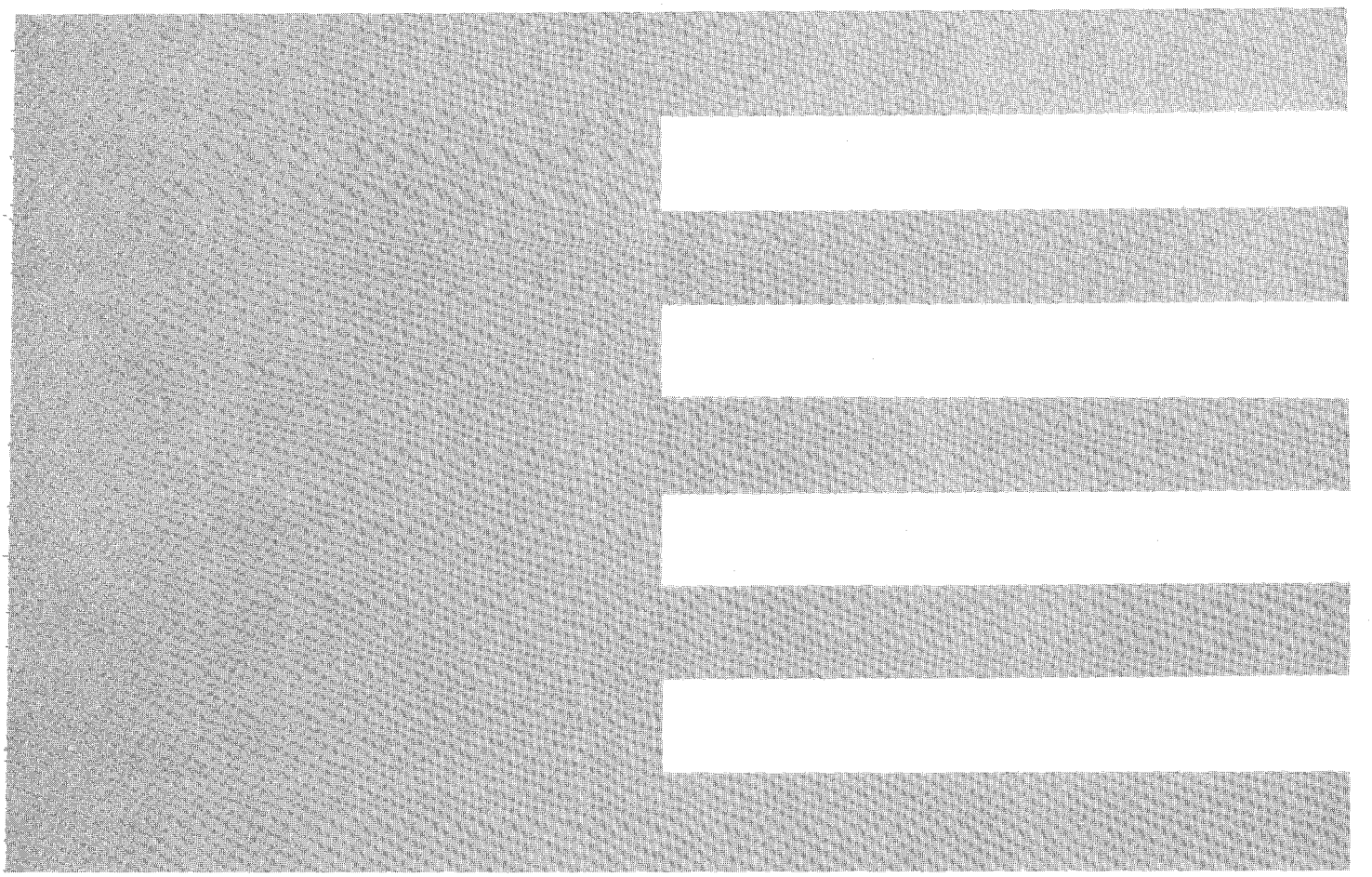

vanish in treetops. They don't mimic or ignore us, and they don't seem to be waiting for us to feed them. But somehow, locked in their exotic skins, they must know we can't help but notice them. And you keep wondering what they're thinking about, what they're waiting for, what's going on inside them. But no matter what you do, even when you shout and throw peanuts, you can't rile or rouse them. You can't get them to reveal themselves. And no matter how many times you go back, you can't separate or name them, you can't pick out individuals. You can't decide which are the males and which are the females, and finally you decide not to return to their cages. But even when you leave the zoo at suppertime, even when your parents have finally stopped quarreling, even when the sun has softened into a soft mist, you know that the zebras are still standing there, vigilant, visible, waiting for something which may not ever happen, patient as early morning, and anonymous as daylight.

On the way home your father says something to hurt your mother and you tell him to shut up. Suddenly he leans over into the back seat and slaps you in the face, just once but hard, though you press down even harder on the floor and refuse to weep. That is itself an achievement, but you've been on your own all day, you're tired, and now you want to punish him.

"Why can't you just leave her alone for once? Why can't you stop picking on her?"

Your father's voice sounds very dull and distant, as if it's coming from far away, from inside someone else. And perhaps it is. "That's not your business, son. I'm afraid that your mother and I have some things to straighten out and I think it would be better if you stayed out of it."

"Do zebras ever eat cactus?" you blurt out suddenly.

Both of your parents look back at you, surprised. You can tell they're gauging the question, gauging you. And you notice that the sky above the car is tinged with color. The highway ribbons out into a long blankness. And the wind bristles on the windshield.

Your father says, "No, they don't."

Thoughtfully, your mother says, "They do, yes, I think they do."

But you can tell her answer is defiant. She doesn't really believe it. And you don't either. Because the question doesn't mean anything. It doesn't make any sense.

And now you're lying in bed looking at the ceiling. The lights are out. In the next room your parents have begun quarreling again, an interminable muffle of voices, and though you strain forward to hear them, you can't make out the words. You wonder if they're talking about you, you wonder how they can go on talking to each other for so long, and later you wonder if you're already sleeping. Occasionally headlights slide slowly down the wall. There's a slight lowing of wind at the window. A door slams. Someone starts a motor in the distance, stops, starts it again, and then drives off. The lights are streaked on the ceiling. And all night the moon is revolving in and out of the treetops like an empty carousel; sometimes you can see it, sometimes you can't, but always the wind is turning and turning it. There's a sudden creaking of the wheel. A man is standing in the doorway in a dark shirt smoking a cigarette. There are a few ribs notched on the wall. Someone is pulling you up by the back of the neck, someone is reaching for your throat, and suddenly you can see the zebras marching into the room, stretching out like a caravan of mules or a long string of lights, riderless, dazzling you with their eyes, dazzling you with their shuddering striped manes, rolling their heads and then moving past you, ignoring you, moving off into the wind, moving past the cactus, climbing up through the desert toward the stars. □

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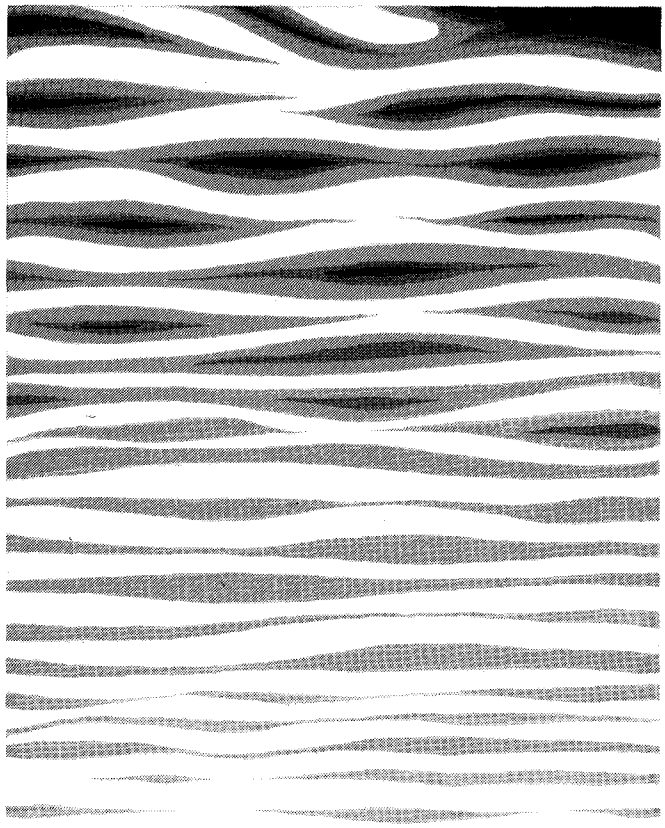

LAPIDARY
(LOVE'S STONE SOUP)

By Charlotte Walker Méndez

1. *Falling Rock Zone*

Rocks have souls. They have been through great adventures. Sometimes a person who has been cruel to rocks will walk under a cliff, and a rock will fall on his head. Stone justice. Karma.

A sage old woman told me that, not long before she died. I forgot about it when I went in for lapidary art, but now it has come back to me. Now I have to think this out. Is what I do cruel to rocks, or am I doing them a favor, showing their beauty to the world? As you read this, do not walk too close to me.

Tonight I went for a walk down by the brook. It was windy and a few heavy raindrops were talking. Just as I emerged from the blackberry patch (which is not easy in the dark) I heard a loud cracking noise, then a heavy splash into the brook. Too big for a stone, too small for a tree. A branch maybe. As I walked along I discovered another tree completely fallen in the path. The wind grew more violent, and the trees all threatened to fall over, just out of passion. I had gone out for a gentle, meditative walk, and the trees were acting as if the soul of Heathcliff had possessed them.

I hurried back to my workshop and finished polishing a slab of crazy-lace agate. Frothy little ocean with a little moon above it. But the threatening trees made me remember the old woman's words. Is it cruel to slice a rock in half and see what's inside it, then polish the halves until jewels emerge? Thunder-eggs, with their crystal landscapes, mystic shadows, translucent songs. Must I call this violent, opening rocks and making them glow? I love them so much, the secrets of stones!

2. *Stone Soup*

Once I was more innocent and only gathered pebbles whole, and easily let go when lovers left. A thousand years ago a young man and I ran toward each other on the beach, before such things were stolen for dormitory posters and television ads. And as we met the air swirled up between us, our fingers not quite touching. It was that little rush of air between our

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fingers which secured us in reality, so the sunset could flare, and I hold out my hands while he poured into them white stones like drops of milk from the sky, foam from the sea. But then he fled to silent places where he cried and sang a life away, with some good soul he loved quite well.

And later, when I was married to one who did not know about the secrets of stones, another sweet friend came. He held my baby while the one who was my husband labored in the dust of old chronicles. He held my baby and smiling crooned to him, Poor little Indian baby, poor little African baby, poor little soul of the world, go to sleep. And my baby slept and my husband found the woman he really loved and my friend went far away to the man who loved him. But he sent me a basket of smooth black stones from Humboldt Bay. They murmured the songs of the humpback whales, sang All is love, All is sadness and rain; and then lay down with the white stones in a bowl, weeping singing sighing down the years.

Coming or going then, my loves would bring a stone or take one away, fingering it absently, half-wondering as they walked, Where was I just now? What happened then? And soon forgetting.

3. *The Secrets of Stones*

Stones mediate somehow between loneliness and love. It's one of their secrets.

When I was poor I walked along the shore while others swam. I picked up this stone and that stone, and peered in the tidewater seeking out beauty, knowing which stones wanted to come with me and which preferred to stay. With each new wave came a moment of clarity, the tumbling stones suspended in brightness. But it was more than a matter of brightness or beauty. It was a gentle game the ocean, the stones and I could play, a light communion.

Now I am richer, I have a little workroom off the garage, with a diamond saw and a lapping wheel, and everything I need to reveal the insides of rocks and make them glow. I travel through mountains deserts shores and plains, gathering my children, thinking I am the guru of rocks. But how do they feel about it? Do they feel they have chosen me, when my hand finds them blindly in tufts of grass or shadow, or mail-order catalogs from Turkey? Do they want to guard their secrets until the secret bursts them from within? Or do they thank me for giving them windows, opening their wisdom to the light?

The truth is, I do it for my sake, not for theirs. I need to know what stones know about loneliness and love. I need to know what the whales are singing. I have all the machinery and skill now to section stones fine enough for sunlight to show through, and polish them until the eye understands what the ear always knew—the sweet murmur of beauty.

Split the Lark—and you'll find the Music—
Roll after roll in scarlet furled . . .
But the stones do not die when you split them, no scarlet unfurls, their music grows louder. See how they tell who they are: I am I, I am from the earth from the sea from outer space. Do not touch me . . .

Oh it is too late! I did not hear that before. Let me touch you, I plead; for my mind has already polished, the sun already penetrates. You are glowing and shimmering your secrets to the sky. Thunder-egg. Crazy-lace agate. Obsidian. Upanishad. Did you want to be unknown forever?

No, do not touch me, they sigh, do not touch me. . . . Someday, I fear an angry rock will fall on me, revealing the inside of my head while it splits itself open to the rays of the sun.

4. *The Dancing Rocks*

A savage place; as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

Little moons, little valleys, little worlds in geodes gaze into my world and say, Do not enter; say, Enter if you dare. Wailingly, I enter. Past comet-filled space, blue shadow oceans, pale continents; to sacred caverns, to the poet's flashing eyes and floating hair. *For he on honey dew hath fed, and drunk the milk of paradise*—and so have I. The place is holy and enchanted with our meeting. The rocks dance.

A stone falls on my head out of the sky. Falling rock zone. A blue deer leaps across the road and is struck by an 8-cylinder stone. Deer crossing. Its body lies dead but a pale blue deer rises from the carcass and bounds into forest, into mountain, into the pleasure dome.

Meanwhile, the sacred river flows.

5. *Geometamorphosis*

I sewed a silken envelope and sent my chaste love across the world some virginal white stones. He took them in his hands and fell asleep. In the night he cried out, giving birth to a strange new stone—volcanic black, sharp and shining, it cut through our dreams. It polished the two halves of our soul until the crystal patterns could be seen, the secret caverns sparkling in the dark moon. And the thunder-egg spirit cried out, oh you have made me sterile now, you have cut me in two! And we called back to ourself from both sides of the world, O have faith! Divide, divide and multiply like cells until you find the body whole, the soul united. We will watch for your lightning, we will listen for thunder! □

CHARLOTTE WALKER MENDEZ lives in Wells Bridge, New York, where she is working on a novel set in Latin America.

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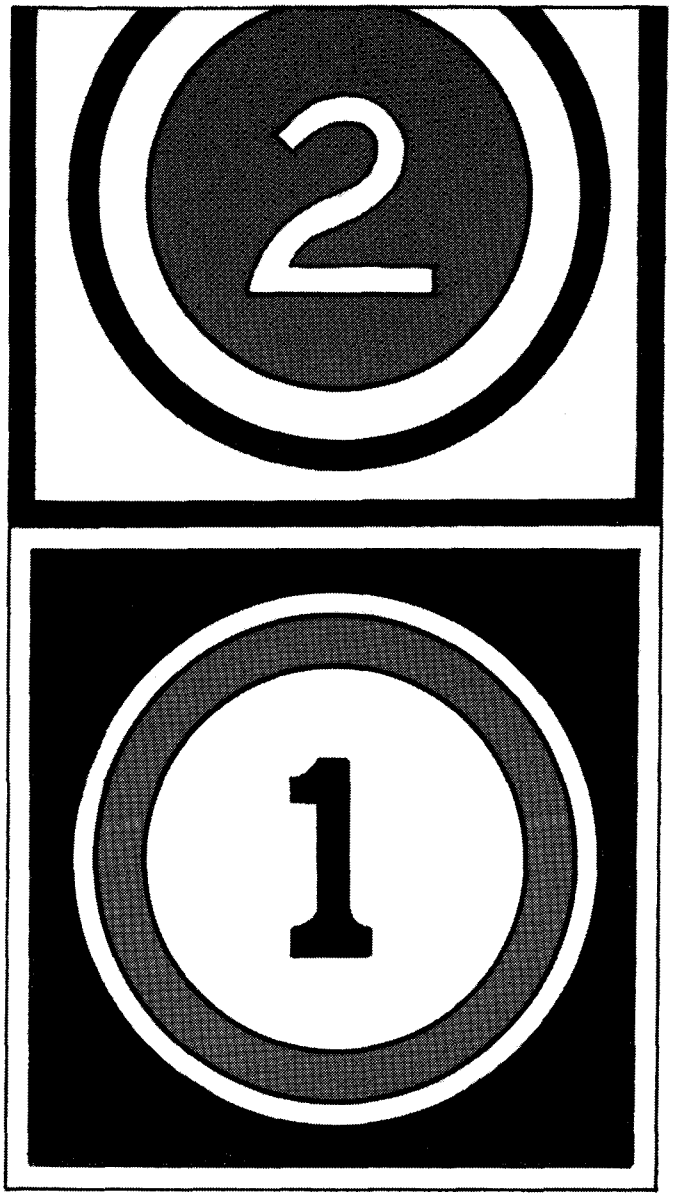

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SOLO DANCE

By Jayne Anne Phillips

She hadn't been home in a long time. Her father had a cancer operation, she went home. She went to the hospital every other day, sitting for hours beside his bed. She could see him flickering. He was very thin and the skin on his legs was soft and pure like fine paper. She remembered him saying 'I give up' when he was angry or exasperated. Sometimes he said it as a joke, 'Jesus Christ, I give up.' She kept hearing his voice in the words now even though he wasn't saying them. She read his get-well cards aloud to him. One was from her mother's relatives. Well, he said, I don't think they had anything to do with it. He was speaking of his divorce two years before.

She put lather in a hospital cup and he got up to shave in the mirror. He had to lean on the sink. She combed the back of his head with water and her fingers. His hair was long after six weeks in the hospital, a grey silver full of shadow and smudge. She helped him get slowly into bed and he lay against the pillows breathing heavily. She sat down again. I can't wait till I get some weight on me, he said. So I can knock down that son of a bitch lawyer right in front of the courthouse.

She sat watching her father. His robe was patterned with tiny horses, sorrels in arabesques. When she was very young, she had started ballet lessons. At the first class her teacher raised her leg until her foot was flat against the wall beside her head. He held it there and looked at her. She looked back at him, thinking to herself it didn't hurt and willing her eyes dry.

Her father was twisting his hands. How's your mother? She must be half crazy by now. She wanted to be by herself and brother that's what she got. □

JAYNE ANNE PHILLIPS is a West Virginian enrolled in the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her fiction collection, Sweethearts, *was published last year by Truck Press.*

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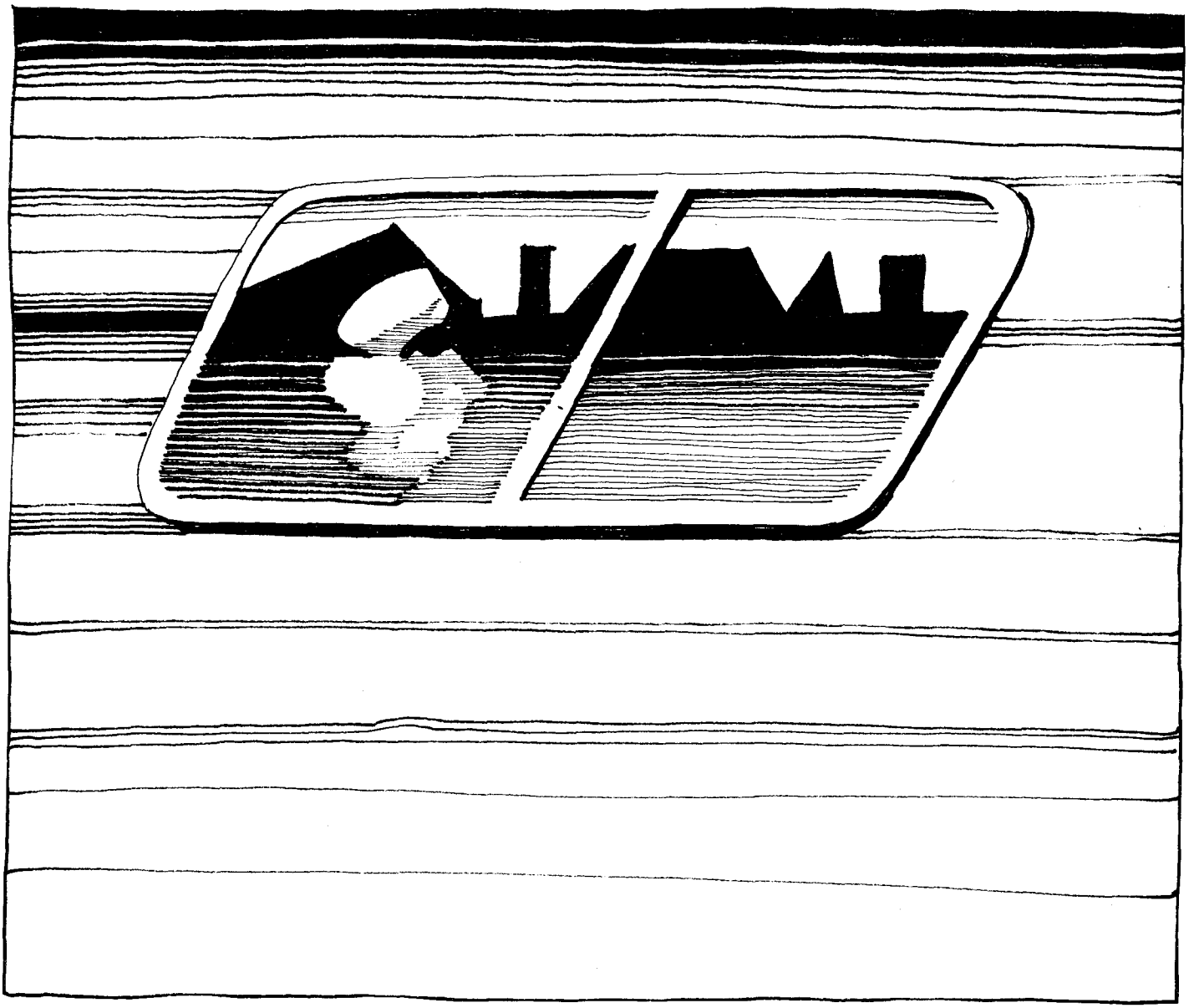

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THE WOMAN WITHOUT THE TIME

BY LENORA K. ROGERS

Never has the bus been so late before. Or so empty. She takes a seat beside the teenage girl who is hugely pregnant, who is looking out the window. The girl's hands rest lightly upon her whelky belly. Under a shirt of blue-green voile the unborn child lies curled . . . child within a child.

The only other passenger is the man sitting across from them. But they cannot see his face because it is hidden beneath an umbrella of newspapers. Maybe it is. Or maybe he has no face at all. Who knows? Or maybe his face is ugly or dirty or deformed. Or, again, she thinks, perhaps it is just a common face—average, ordinary, unmemorable. Such faces, she ruminates, are best kept concealed from the world, this freak-crazed world that could assess only aberration, appreciate only error.

She studies the back of the driver's head, the tight-lipped curls of brown below his blue cap. The cap sits levelly upon his head. He does not move his head. His hands move, his arms move, his feet move, but not his head. He whistles an old blues tune with a lazy, undemanding rhythm. She wonders if his lips move when he is whistling.

Then she looks at her watch. "What time is it?" But the watch has stopped. She asks the pregnant girl-child, "Do you have the time?"

The girl-child, regarding her swollen stomach, replies emptily, "Only in months."

LENORA K. ROGERS is a former school teacher "addicted to Russian tea cakes, Chopin nocturnes, and the short stories of Miss Jean Stafford."

"Maybe *he* would have the time." She points to the newspaper man across the aisle, who just then coughs belligerently.

"Ask him," says the girl-child.

"No, I'd better not," says the woman without the time, shrinking back. "He may not want to be disturbed. Anyhow, at the next stop somebody with a watch is sure to get on. I'll wait."

The bus speeds up. They can see the next stop clearly. A block away they can see six or seven people waiting, getting closer, getting bigger. But the bus does not begin to brake. Instead, contrarily, it begins to go faster. It goes through a stoplight and it doesn't stop for the people who are waiting.

"What's the matter with him?" asks the woman without the time. "Didn't he see those people back there?"

The pregnant girl-child shakes her head. The newspaper man rattles his pages. The woman without the time rubs her wrist where the stopped watch is. Twisting the band, she is annoyed. "This is so strange. I wish I knew the time."

The bus is going faster. Buildings flip past like pages of a wind-blown magazine. Street signs melt into each other. The bus is flying. It is moving even more rapidly than the sunlight jumping in and out the windows between shadows.

The woman without the time suddenly snatches the cord above her head and draws it, like a rein, toward herself. The bell sounds clearly, but the driver does not respond. The woman without the time springs to her feet in fury. "Stop! Stop this bus! I want to get off!"

The hands of the driver cling whitely to the wheel. They do not move. His feet do not move. He stares straight ahead of him down the road. He no longer whistles.

"Stop!" the woman screams again. "Stop!"

There is no reply. The brick wall directly ahead spreads itself, like a huge bird ready to catch its prey. The bus flies into it like a moth. There is a quivering of wings, impact screams. A sidewalk blossoms redly.

People run to see the spectacle.

A child dragging his mother by the hand across the street stoops suddenly and picks something up. "Finders, keepers!" he exclaims, overjoyed, then puts the object to his ear. "It's ticking," he beams. "It's really ticking." □

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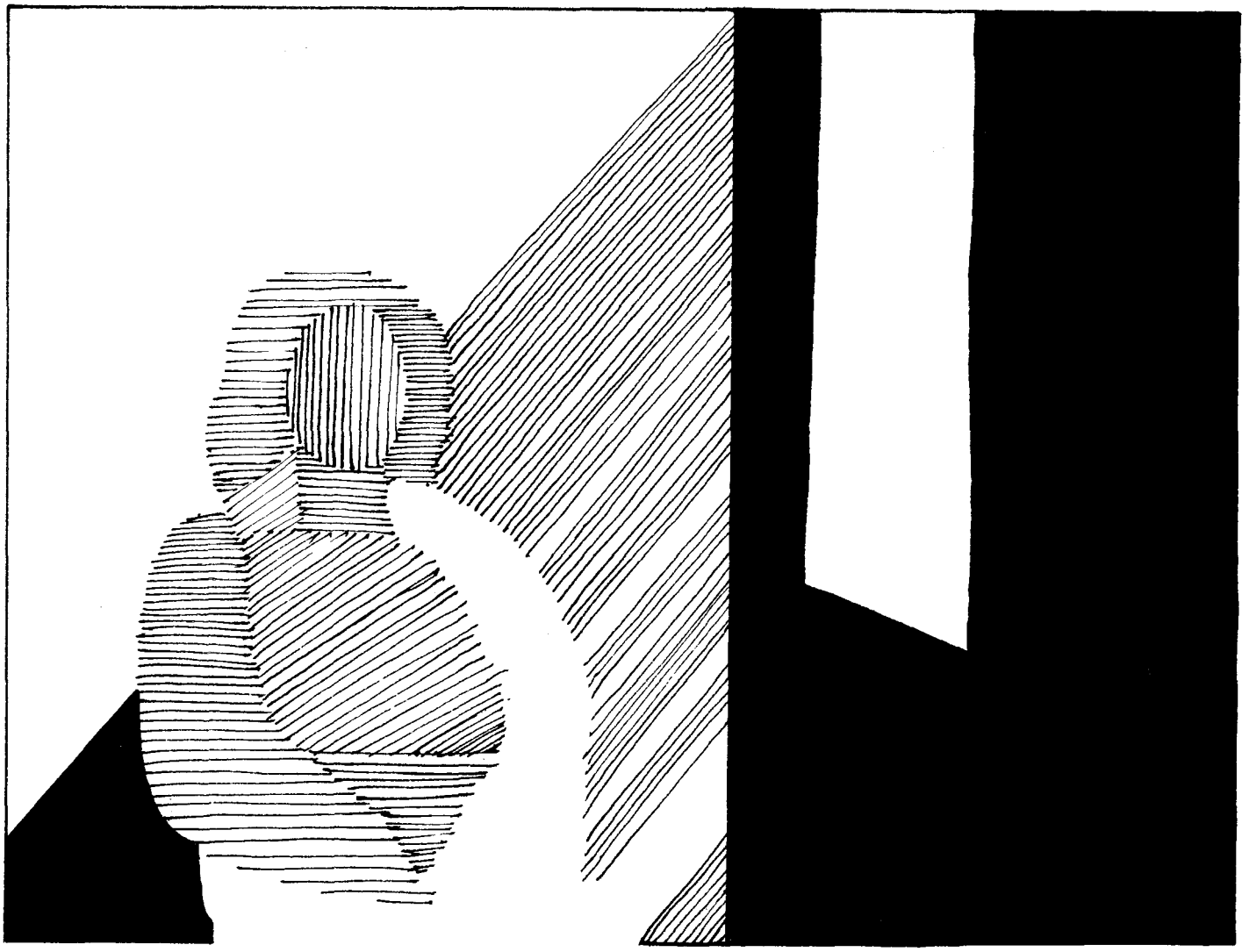

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THE WHOLE STORY

By Naomi Rothberg

Vivie's mother never slept at night. It was a torment. It was destroying her face, breaking down all the pretty parts like used furniture. But she would sooner that, it seemed, than be one of those who did manage to "get their beauty rest"; "asleep as soon as their heads hit the pillow"; "nothing troubles them"; their nervous systems fashioned out of something dumb and unresponsive as rope.

She had only to look in the direction of any of her children to be troubled past all possibility of rest. Everything they did. . . . And how to help them? How to guide them when they resisted all advice? Practically held their hands over their ears. Deaf to her sure knowledge of all the disasters they were heaping up for their futures. They fled the truth.

Everyone fled the truth. She had also had, most of her life, a husband.

Once the worry stops the grief begins. Who are the merry widows? If one has no more anxiety than from reading *The Times* each day, how even then does one find sleep? No pill could hold her under more than three hours.

Which made things difficult in the morning. In the light which was cruelest to her face. Often she would still be in the first layer of her underwear when Vivie arrived at the foot of the bed on her way to nine o'clock class high school, to nine o'clock class college, to her job, home for the weekend (with her own little daughter to be tucked in the extra bed). The girdle her mother intended to compress around herself for a neater (unindentable) appearance flopped still over the back of a chair. She would have made the bed (that too should yield no evidence of soft parts) and then, just for a minute, lain back down. Never expecting it, but it was always then that sleep overtook her, dropping over her lightly as it would on a cat in an alley. But sleep nonetheless.

Her mouth would have fallen open. The white arm she had thrown over her eyes for just that *instant's* relief would melt closer to them. The hand resting on her belly relax.

All of her curves milk and white bread; the breasts sliding like cream from the stiffness of the brassiere, the delicately browning skin of her abdomen where it sloped over her ribs.

The looseness of her nylon bloomers which she chose for sensible service disloyally calling out the luxury of her lap.

No one but Vivie knew. She carried this body so well hidden below the ruined face. Years of this body each morning lying unknown to anyone, the thighs at ease against each other, little damaged, only the tiny blue lines and small places where the flesh wadded down (so many years of marching).

Her daughter guessed a chilliness in her thighs. Guessed her mother dreaming of someone who threw a light blanket over her. Covering as well the gleaming calves and big clean feet.

Too big and too flat for any vanity. Serviceable, well-kept, trimmed according to the "cut straight across" method earnestly received in Hygiene class in 1921 and re-dictated as earnestly to the ignorant parents (with their splintered peasant toenails) to the just discernibly grateful husband and then to the children, so totally, inexplicably, heart-breakingly resistant, one after the other.

It was the feet Vivie yearned most to take into her hands. To knead and stroke and work with her fingers between the powdered toes.

She would never dare do it. Other considerations aside, her mother did sleep like a cat and the terror she would cause the woman to jolt her awake by the sensation of being touched, only to catch this most bewildering of her daughters standing at the bottom of the bed, *caressing* one of her big clean feet. . . . □

NAOMI ROTHBERG raises Angora goats and is about to begin her first year at law school. She lives in New Jersey with her husband and young son.

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Donald E. Shepardson / Robert F. Gish

Shifting Images of Adolf Hitler

He was a man possessed of a malignant soul, a man whose very presence on the planet challenged the concept of a just universe. At the same time he may have been the most important political figure of the twentieth century, if only because of the consequences inherent in the destruction he wrought. As his biographer, Alan Bullock, has noted, Adolf Hitler was a man dedicated to destroying the "system" of Europe, the liberal bourgeois order which had rejected him. In many respects he succeeded, although not in the way he had intended. The Europe which existed prior to World War II ceased to exist as a sovereign entity for nearly two decades. Although it has recovered much of its prewar strength, it is doubtful if it will ever achieve the primacy it once held.

For three decades and more, Hitler and various aspects of Nazism have been studied in an endless series of biographies, memoirs, and articles. Still the fascination continues, and it was no surprise that John Toland's *Adolf Hitler* remained on the best-seller list for some weeks. Why this fascination continues is itself a question for which there seems to be no answer. Perhaps, as some have suggested, it is partly nostalgia; not nostalgia for Hitler or for the war, but for the beautiful dream—the "myth," if you wish—which went with it. America and its Allies were on the "right" side at Armageddon. For the generation which fought World War II the struggle against Nazism was truly a crusade "upon which," as Churchill said in 1940, "depends the survival of Christian civilization." "No English soldier," wrote the British historian A.J.P. Taylor, "who rode with the tanks into liberated Belgium or saw the German murder camps at Dachau or Buchenwald could doubt that the war had been a noble crusade." With the passage of time the noble crusade and the dream of a better world to come seemed to have been only an illusion. The Cold War and the American intervention into Indochina did much to jolt the confidence in their institutions—and, indeed, in the moral values of "Christian civilization"—of many Americans and others in the West. In his beautifully written *20th Century Journey*, William L. Shirer lamented the inability of man to rise above the level of the savage, noting "how good Christian and Jewish men . . . could sit calmly and coolly in their air-conditioned offices in Washington and cold-bloodedly, without a qualm or a moral quiver, plan and order the massacre of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children . . . in a faraway land of poor peasants who had never threatened us in the slightest . . . . "

Even without the impact of nostalgia or the nagging puzzle of why the beautiful dream did not come true, interest in Hitler was sure to endure because of the type of man he was and the nature of the movement he led. Despite the trend toward the analysis of social forces in historical development, the "great man" continues to captivate the imagination of those who read history for the pure pleasure of it. "Greatness" wrote Jacob Burckhardt, "is all that we are not." Whether it be Caesar or Napoleon, Bismarck or Lenin, there will always be fascination and a bit of envy of those persons who grasped the stream of time and molded it to their own ends as most of us do not. To be great, of course, does not mean to be good. As Burckhardt noted, posterity grants to great men "a strange exemption from the ordinary moral code." Primarily this exemption comes from having acted for the good of a cause beyond themselves, such as the protection of a country or the furtherance of an ideal. In Hitler's case the ordinary moral code does not apply, since he did not subscribe to it even in theory, and he fully intended to eliminate all vestiges of it. Nazism was, as Herman Rauschning labeled it, *The Revolution of Nihilism*, a frontal assault against the sacred values of Western Civilization.

Hitler's role in history can never be separated from World War II. Had he died a few weeks prior to his fiftieth birthday in April of 1939, his reputation in history might be quite different than it is today. His last diplomatic move would have been the triumph at Munich, and no one would have known that he fully intended to absorb the remainder of Czechoslovakia as a prelude to expansion to the east, although there were indications of this intention in his writings. Some of the continued interest in Hitler is part of a more general interest in the Great Depression and World War II. Hitler remains the most visible figure in an age of giants—in contrast to the present age of the bland. Today no leaders in the world are comparable to a Hitler, a Stalin, a Churchill or a Roosevelt; perhaps Hitler and his era appear exciting to those who find our present, unheroic age somewhat boring.

For over a decade following World War II, Hitler was chiefly seen as having been an aberration, both in German history and in the history of Europe in general. His image was that of an evil fool. The evil was obvious: Europe lay in ruins because of a war Hitler had begun as part of an attempt to conquer the world in partnership with his Italian and Japanese allies. At Nuremberg the prosecution for the International Military Tribunal proved conclusively that Hitler and his "gang" had been guilty of waging a war of aggression and of crimes against humanity.

At the same time, and paradoxically, Hitler was seen as the clown with the Charlie Chaplin mustache who somehow managed to obtain power in Germany despite his lack of talent or ability. It was easy, in retrospect, to see Hitler as having been the tool of other groups, whether big business, the army, the

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aristocracy, or whatever one wished to offer as a substitute for the obvious. The fact is, Hitler possessed political talents approaching genius, however much we may wish otherwise, and however evil his goals may have been. Like his contemporary, Stalin, one major thread appears repeatedly throughout Hitler's career: the tendency of others to underestimate him and to believe they could use him for their own purposes. Invariably, it was he who used them, with the last of his victims in Germany being the famed General Staff of the army.

In military matters also, Hitler was thought of as a fool whose intervention nullified the brilliance of his commanders and eventually resulted in his defeat. Here, too, the passage of time has helped to set the record straight. Hitler was certainly no Napoleon, but neither was he the fool that some of his defeated generals would have had us believe. If he is to be held responsible for the defeats after Stalingrad in January of 1943, then he must be credited with the victories during the opening years of the war, especially the campaign against the French in 1940. Prior to the assault against France, Hitler overruled the Army High Command by accepting a plan submitted to him by General Fritz von Manstein. Instead of sweeping through the low countries, as the German armies had done in World War I, Manstein called for a feint through the low countries with a major thrust through the Ardennes Forest that would first take Sedan and then strike for the English Channel. Had Hitler heeded the High Command, the result might well have been a repeat of World War I and stalemate, instead of a smashing victory which gave him control of western Europe. In the end it took the combined might of the world's greatest powers to defeat him, and even then there were times when the outcome was in doubt. Only recently have we come to realize how close Hitler came to winning the war. Works such as F. W. Winterbotham's *The Ultra Secret* and Anthony Cave-Brown's *The Bodyguard of Lies* have made available new information that calls for a revision of the military history of the war. Throughout the war the Allies were privy to German planning because of the Ultra secret and the breaking of the German code. With the exception of the Battle of the Bulge in December of 1944, when Hitler declared radio silence, Allied strategists and tacticians knew what the Germans were going to do, sometimes before local German commanders. Had this information not been available to the Allies the outcome of many battles and, indeed, the war itself, might have been quite different.

The image of Hitler as the evil fool had one great advantage: since Hitler and the Nazis were responsible for everything, no one else was responsible for anything. The view pleased Germans as well as their conquerors. In 1959 William L. Shirer angered many Germans, as well as scholars of German history, when he maintained that the roots of the Third Reich had been present in German history since at least the time of Luther; and that the crimes of Nazism could not be laid merely to a clique of men who forced their will on an entire nation. In 1961 the British historian, A.J.P. Taylor, angered even more people with his work, *The Origins of the Second World War*. "In retrospect," Taylor wrote of the origins of the war, "though many were guilty, none was innocent . . . . This is a story without heroes; and perhaps even without villains." Taylor not only challenged the view of Hitler as an aberration in German history, but further challenged the view that Hitler was an aberration among contemporary statesmen. Hitler had "blundered" into war in 1939; he had miscalculated the international situation rather than having begun the war to satisfy a megalomaniacal desire for conquest. Moreover, Taylor continued, Hitler was a "traditional German statesman who . . . in principle and doctrine was no more wicked and unscrupulous than many other contemporary statesmen."

At first reading it was easy to dismiss Taylor as something of an eccentric or a charlatan having sport, but there was too much truth in his assertions to take them so lightly. Hitler certainly did represent ideas and views common to Germany and to his native Austria. Anti-semitism was both widespread and respectable. In foreign policy Hitler's views were similar to many Pangermans who dreamed of extension to the east and the creation of a greater Germany which would dominate *Mitteleuropa*. As Hitler's biographer Joachim Fest has noted, however, anti-semitism and expansionism were not unique to Germany, nor was the establishment of Fascist government following World War I. Here Fest, and Taylor, have a point. By 1936 it had become obvious that the dreams of Woodrow Wilson were not to be. Aside from Czechoslovakia, where democracy was fragile, the nations created out of the shambles of the Austrian, German, and Russian Empires had rejected democracy and established governments Fascist in character, if not in ideology, which were anti-democratic, anti-semitic, and eager to expand whenever the opportunity arose. In retrospect, Hitler represented not so much a "German tradition," but rather a set of goals and values common to many nations in Europe and beyond. "What distinguished him from all his ilk," wrote Fest, "was his capacity for political action."

Much of recent scholarship has tended to "normalize" Hitler within the context of his era and society, something which no doubt says as much about his contemporaries as it does about Hitler. The question remains, however: How different was Hitler from everyone else, or, at least, from most people? After studying Hitler, Erich Fromm concluded that "one can legitimately assume the presence of a psychotic, perhaps schizophrenic streak in him. In spite of a mad streak in Hitler he was sane enough to pursue his aims purposefully . . . Certainly had Hitler been a defendant in a court of Justice . . . a plea of insanity would have had no chance. Yet, although in conventional terms Hitler was not a psychotic man, in dynamic, interpersonal terms he was a very sick man." Hermann Rauschning, who knew Hitler, described him as an "insane adventurer." "Dostoevsky might well have invented him," Rauschning continued, "with the morbid derangement and the pseudo-creativeness of his hysteria." We may never be sure whether Hitler was a "madman" or "insane" in a clinical sense. But we may be sure that he was most abnormal, not so much perhaps because of his views, but in his willingness to destroy both civilization and himself in order to implement them. Perhaps Bullock put it best when he noted, "With Hitler, indeed, one is uncomfortably aware of never being far from the realm of the irrational. It is this mixture of calculation and fanaticism, with the difficulty of telling where one ends and the other begins, which is the peculiar characteristic of Hitler's personality. To ignore or underestimate either element is to present a distorted picture."

All things considered, the time was perhaps right for a new biography of Hitler aimed at a more general reading audience. Since Shirer's *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, most of the works dealing with Hitler, such as Bullock's revised *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (1962), Werner Maser's *Hitler: Legend, Myth and Reality* (1971), and Fest's *Hitler* (1973) were aimed

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at scholars and history buffs with a substantial knowledge of their subject. Unfortunately, Toland's work leaves much to be desired. Writing for the *New Republic,* Henry Fairlie referred to Toland as a "Charlatan in the Archives." The designation is too harsh. More accurately, Toland is a good writer who is simply out of his league. In his forward Toland states that he intended to put aside his own preconception of Hitler and to write a biography of him "as though he lived a hundred years ago." In the process of writing such an objective account, Toland relied heavily on "oral history"—that is, on the recollections of those who "knew Hitler intimately," such as his chauffeur, pilot, etc.

Oral history as a tool for writing history has become increasingly popular over the past few years. No doubt it is a useful tool, but always a dangerous one. Aside from personal motive that may consciously distort the past, the human memory is too often subject to unconscious distortion imposed by the wish for what ought to have been. In Hitler's case, those who were closest to him are dead, with the exception of Albert Speer and one or two others. Even here, however, there is always the question of whether anyone was "close" to Hitler. "Why can't I call Hitler my friend?" Speer wrote. "What is missing? I spent endless time with him, was almost at home in his private circle and, moreover, his foremost associate in his favorite field, architecture. Everything was missing. Never in my life had I met a person who so seldom revealed his feelings." While in Spandau prison Speer and his fellow inmate, Rudolph Hess, who had known Hitler since 1921, concluded that there had been only five men with whom Hitler used the *du* form of close friendship. Among them had been Dietrich Eckart, Hitler's mentor who died in 1923. In addition, there had been Hermann Esser and Christian Weber, both party members from the early days of the movement, Julius Steicher, the editor of the pornographic and anti-semitic *Der Stürmer,* and Ernst Roehm, head of *Sturmabteilung* (SA) or the storm troopers. "In Esser's case," Speer relates, "he found a pretext after 1933 to reintroduce the formal *Sie;* Weber he avoided; Streicher he treated impersonally; and Roehm he had killed. Even toward Eva Braun he was never completely relaxed and human."

Hitler's relations with Eva Braun and other women come close to Joachim Fest's designation of him as an "unperson." There is a murky quality about it, and perhaps, like much about Hitler, the truth will never be known. His long-time associate Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl and others have maintained that Hitler was impotent, a belief which found acceptance during the war and even has its adherents today. In his wartime psychiatric report Walter Langer stated that it was "probably true that he is impotent." Thirty years later, writing in his *The Evolution of Hitler's Germany,* Horst von Malitz speculated that Hitler had adopted the famous Nazi salute as a substitute for an erect penis. The fact is, the Nazi salute was a revived form of the old Roman salute used by Mussolini and the Italian Fascists, from whom Hitler borrowed much in addition to the salute.

* * *

Aside from impotence and suspicions of homosexuality, speculation has continued that Hitler forced his women to engage in aberrant sexual acts. If Hitler ever loved a woman, it was his half-niece, Angela (Geli) Raubal. According to Otto Strasser, Geli Raubal was driven to suicide in September of 1931 by Hitler's possessiveness and by his sexual aberrations. Before her death Geli related to Strasser that Hitler made her undress and then demanded that she squat over his face and urinate on him. Strasser's account, by itself, may be taken with suspicion, because of his own relationship with Hitler; he had been expelled from the Nazi party in the summer of 1930 following a clash with Hitler, and later his brother Gregor was murdered during the famous Blood Purge of June 30, 1934. Yet despite Strasser's dislike of Hitler, there is nothing to suggest that he simply created the story to defame Hitler. Similar accounts have been given by Hanfstaengl and others.

The woman most qualified to comment on Hitler's sexual preferences was Eva Braun, his mistress for fourteen years. Although Eva Braun left a diary, there is little in it to confirm any aberrant sexual behavior on Hitler's part. Eva did try to kill herself at least twice, but this seems to have been because Hitler neglected her, and not because of any mistreatment on his part or any guilt for having submitted to his sexual demands. Her entry that "he uses me only for certain purposes" has suggested to some that the "purposes" were abnormal. Werner Maser, however, maintains that Eva's statement meant simply that there was "no doubt that Hitler led a normal sex life" and that she complained only that Hitler used her for sexual purposes and nothing else. This may have been the case, since most of the time he treated her with indifference, if not contempt. Both accounts of Hitler's sex life may be true; that is, like many people, he was both normal and aberrant at the same time.

Both Maser and Toland are trying too hard to normalize Hitler when they attribute to him the feeling of genuine love. With the exception of his mother, who died in 1907, it is difficult to believe Hitler ever loved any other human being. The same lack of feeling is manifest in his attitude toward Germany and the German people. "Because of him," wrote Toland, "his beloved Germany lay in ruins." There is no doubt about the first part of Toland's statement. The second part hardly goes far enough, nor does it ring true. Not only Germany but an area ranging from England to the Urals, from Norway to the Black Sea, lay devastated because of him. For Hitler, however, the fate of Germany and its people was secondary to the fate of himself. At least since Stalingrad, it had been apparent that Germany was losing the war. Had Hitler really loved Germany he could have spared it two years of war and bloodshed by sacrificing himself. Instead he condemned his "beloved Germany" to additional destruction without the slightest concern for the suffering he imposed upon those who had followed him. Shortly before the end of the war, when Allied armies were closing in from all sides, he ordered the complete destruction of the country, regardless of the effect it would have on the German population. "The nature of the struggle," he told his commanders in March of 1945, "permits no consideration for the population to be taken." When Albert Speer tried to intercede on behalf of the population, Hitler replied:

> If the war is lost, the people will be lost also. It is not necessary to worry about what the German people will need for elemental survival. On the contrary, it is best for us to destroy even these things. For the nation has proved to be the weaker, and the future belongs solely to the stronger eastern nation. In any case only those who are inferior will remain after this struggle, for the good have already been killed.

Considering Hitler's relations with others, one must conclude, as did Joachim Fest, that "Geli Raubal dead was probably closer to him than the living girl had ever been," and that Hitler remained always a stranger to his closest acquaintances and to the German people, a stranger who returned love and adoration with indifference.

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In Toland's case the desire to be objective and put aside all preconceptions of Hitler may have led him to a different kind of distortion. The passage of time is supposed to give an observer a better view of the subject, a picture undistorted by emotional bias. It may, however, lead to the opposite. It is not surprising that much about Hitler and Nazi Germany should tax the credulity of a writer approaching the subject in depth for the first time, precisely because it all seems so irrational compared to our present time. A case in point occurs in Toland's description of the events leading up to the Munich crisis of September, 1938. Hitler was a supreme gambler; despite his statement that he went the "way that Providence dictates with the assurance of a sleepwalker" Hitler was subject to the strain and tension that besets any gambler. From May to September of 1938, Europe hung on the brink of war. Hitler had told his generals that he intended to "smash" Czechoslovakia on October 1, regardless of their protestations, and even if it meant war with England, France, and the Soviet Union as well. He believed the English and the French would not fight, thereby nullifying the alliance with the Soviets. Without foreign help the Czechs must either submit or be overrun. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's visits to Germany on September 15 and 22 only heightened the tension. Each visit brought first hope and then despair. For Hitler the failure to achieve his goal meant humiliation or war. In either case he might fall from power as a result of a coup d'état by the army.

It is quite understandable that Hitler was nearing a nervous breakdown. In his *Berlin Diary* and later in his *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Shirer stated that at the time of the Godesberg meeting on the 22nd, Hitler had "black patches under his eyes" and displayed a nervous tic when he walked. "On more than one occasion," Shirer wrote, "he had lost control of himself completely, hurling himself to the floor and chewing the edge of the carpet." Hence the term "carpet eater" (*Teppichfresser*). According to Toland, on the other hand, "At the [Hotel] Dreesen several newsmen were circulating a story that the Führer was so distraught over the Czech crisis that he would fling himself to the floor and chew the edge of the carpet. This report had been inspired by a remark of one Hitler aide that the Chief had become so furious that he was 'eating the carpet.' This slang expression was taken literally by some American correspondents, who should have translated it into 'climbing the walls.' Such naïveté amused Hitler's adjutants, who had seldom seen the Führer lose his temper."

After covering Hitler and the Nazis for years, Shirer was neither naive nor ignorant of the German language. When asked about Toland's account, Shirer replied (in a letter to this writer) that "The editor of a leading German weekly, secretly an anti-Nazi, told me of Hitler literally chewing the carpet one day at Godesberg as we watched the Fuehrer stride past us. He had a nervous tic to his leg. My editor friend described the tantrums of Hitler during that week." Considering Shirer's personal experience and the amount of time he spent researching and preparing his *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, both his credentials and his description must be given the benefit of the doubt.

At times Toland reveals a lack of thoroughness in his research. When describing the *Reichstag* fire and the subsequent confession of Marinus van der Lubbe to the crime, he states that many believed van der Lubbe to be only a tool of the Nazis. "So did many historians," Toland continues "including Bullock and Shirer, but their judgment was reached before publication of a detailed book by Fritz Tobias which concluded that neither the Nazis nor the Communists were involved in the fire and that van der Lubbe was the sole arsonist." In his revised edition of 1926, Bullock cited the work of Tobias and noted that "Herr Tobias may be right in arguing that this, the simplest explanation of all, is the true one." Shirer was aware of the Tobias work, since it had originally been published in *Der Spiegel* in 1959. He believed that both van der Lubbe *and* some Nazis planned to set the *Reichstag* on fire: "The coincidence that the Nazis had found a demented Communist arsonist who was out to do exactly what they themselves had determined to do seems incredible but is nevertheless supported by the evidence." Shirer was skeptical of the Tobias thesis attributing sole culpability to van der Lubbe, and conceded in his correspondence with me that "The whole truth about the *Reichstag* fire will probably never be known."

Perhaps the most distressing aspect of Toland's work is the tone. With statements about Hitler's "beloved Germany" and the designation of him as the "Knight of the *Hakenkreuz*" Toland appears to be presenting him as a tragic hero—though in all fairness, this heroism may be more inferred by the reader than intended by Toland. Here the historian must again grapple with the question of whether to grant to Hitler that "strange exemption from the ordinary moral code" so often accorded to the great men of the past. We must ask ourselves whether the passage of time is beginning to blur the once vivid memories of Auschwitz, of Dachau, of Babi-Yar, and whether in decades hence we may remember Hitler's swath and forget the blood of those millions of humanity who paid the price of his "greatness."

—Donald E. Shepardson

History Bloody History

The Redeemed Captive, by John Williams. Edward W. Clark, ed. Massachusetts, $8.00
Massacre at Mountain Meadows, by William Wise. Crowell. $11.95

Murder and mayhem in the name of God, country, profit, or sheer self-indulgence continue to shock in life and in story—among other reasons, because of their uncommonly common occurrence. Collective slaughter and massacre associated with the exploitation and persecution of groups by groups occur so frequently in the history of this country (not to mention the history of mankind) as to make American "settlement" seem something of a contradiction in terms. Villainy and violence, so the truism goes, have done their part in forging the American way East, West, North, and South—over plains, mountains, and the bodies of Christian and pagan alike. What Martin Marty calls our "righteous empire" is also a vengeful and guilty one. Attempts to explain and understand that vengeance and guilt, our myth, fill many volumes. In unsettling *au courant* paranoia one can read more about it in *The Redeemed Captive*, John Williams' guilt-ridden diary/jeremiad about the Deerfield Massacre (1704), entailing his captivity and persecution by Jesuits and

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helpmate Mohawks during the French and Indian Wars; and in *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* one finds William Wise's finger-pointing condemnation of the Mormons and their role, along with their Lamanite (Pah-Ute and other American Indian) lackeys, as perpetrators of, as the sub-title has it, "An American Legend and a Monumental Crime"—the mass-murder in southern Utah (1857) of a group of Arkansas emigrants headed for California and known as the Francher Party, named after Captain Alexander Francher, the wagon train's organizer and leader.

Captivity chronicles are among the earliest remnants of American legend. Hannah Dustan is perhaps the most eponymic figure, inspiring Cotton Mather's admiration in the granddaddy of all jeremiads, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702). The mother's revenge Hannah enjoyed matched murder for murder, tomahawk for tomahawk, and helped build the excuses needed for the prolonged genocide of Native Americans. Mather's zeal in telling how the "Formidable Savages," those "furious Tawnies," dashed out the brains of Hannah's infant and buried their hatchets in the brains of other captives is counterpointed by his heroine's furious break-of-day attack on her sleeping oppressors as she strikes blow after frenzied blow upon their heads, leading eventually to her redeeming a bounty for their scalps. With variation, it is a formula common to both of the books under discussion here.

* * *

The Redeemed Captive recounts not so much a mother's hyperbolic revenge as a father's comparatively subdued resignation and self-reprisal, a Puritan minister's attempt to save himself and his children from Jesuit captivity and indoctrination and the threat not just of pain and death but damnation. His log of tortures serves as a type of redemption voucher offered by one who has himself been redeemed physically and spiritually, one who has survived the vengeance of catholic Canada.

Edward W. Clark's editing and collating, his notes and general introduction, provide meticulous background to John Williams' life before and after the Deerfield Massacre. Appointed minister of Deerfield, Massachusetts, in 1688, he proved a popular source of continuous strength to his parishioners, a man who never faltered in his devotion to covenant theology. When Hertel de Rouville's band of Canadians and Indians attacked Deerfield in 1704 as part of England's and France's attempts to control North America, Williams escaped slaughter only to be herded to Quebec, a captive of the Jesuits for almost three agonizing years. Williams does not, however, blame his captors, does not physically retaliate for the pain and death they inflict on his family and congregation; and like Job he does not deny his faith. The blame is directed toward himself and he uses the experiences of his captivity to sermonize on the evils of popery and the glories of direct worship and adherence to the Covenant—for, as with the Israelites, New Canaan was to be secured, the City on a Hill established. No matter the sorrow felt at the murder of his two children in the initial attack, the burning of his house, the tortures of the forced march north to Montreal and the killing of twenty or thirty captives on the way, including his wife. "Blessed be the name of the Lord," says Williams.

During the ordeal, many others like Williams met their fate piously. Take the example of Mary Brooks telling Williams: "By my fall on the ice yesterday I wronged myself, causing an abortion this night so that I am not able to travel far. I know they will kill me today, but . . . God has (praised be His name) by His spirit with His word strengthened me to my last encounter with death." Some, like Williams' son, Samuel, after arrival in Canada and under psychological harassment by Jesuits, turned on their spiritual Father and thus on their worldly ones. In an epistolary exhortation of several pages, John Williams attempts to redeem his captive son. The letter serves, in the tradition of poetic debate, as a Puritan vs. Romanist sermon within the larger Sermon of Williams' autobiographical narrative. The rhetoric involved in the attempted reconversion of his son is the epitome of evangelistic proselytizing echoed throughout *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* in the words, centuries later, of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Williams offers in retrospect the story of his son's and his own redemption as evidence of a vengeful God's ultimate mercy and forgiveness. If one is to believe William Wise, the Mormons, in their struggle toward their promised land, found such qualities in scarce supply.

* * *

In strident tones, Wise takes to task the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints—an awesome force destined, given its special covenant of the book of Mormon and its believers, to collide with the United States government and non-believing Gentiles (like the Francher Party) in the Zion of "Deseret," otherwise known as Utah Territory. Mormonism is the object of countless "injustices" and "persecution" (deservedly so, suggests Wise)—including expulsion from Ohio; Haun's Mill, Missouri, where state militiamen massacred seventeen Mormon "enemy;" and even more traumatically Nauvoo, Illinois, and nearby Carthage, where the Prophet Smith and his brother, Hyrum, were martyred—and Wise tirelessly attempts to document the revenge that above all motivated its evolution. Thus *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* reports countless examples of sermon-harangues, such as Smith saying, "If the people will let us alone, we will preach the gospel in peace. But if they come on us and molest us, we will establish our religion by the sword. We will trample down our enemies and make it one gore of blood from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean." Made to appear anything but saints, Smith, Young (the Lion of the Desert) and their army of murdering Danites are denounced as "polygamists, lawbreakers and . . . the unfeeling architects of a truly monumental crime."

Brigham Young, who on Smith's death took over Church leadership from Sidney Rigdon in a shrewd ploy by announcing categorically and conveniently that the already designated Apostles were the authorized leaders and that he was the leading Apostle, is viewed by the author, in effect, as a Rocky Mountain Mussolini: "a supreme egotist, steeped in his own self-importance, who was convinced of his right not only to lead a vast army of followers but ultimately to rule supreme over all mankind."

In its structure, *Massacre* is reminiscent of "The Convergence of the Twain," in that the meeting of the Mormons, their Indian (Lamanite) hatchet men, and the Francher Party at Mountain Meadows is not without its Hardyesque ironies. Certainly Wise tries hard to make it seem as if the slaying of between 120 and 150 people was the end result of the whole Mormon movement up to 1857. As the blackest day in Mormon history, the Mountain Meadow massacre can be viewed as a letting of blood that otherwise might have meant all-out war with the United States. In this political sense, too, Wise wants the event to seem monumental, and he dramatizes it as such in directing a cast of Presidents Polk, Fillmore, and Buchanan; and militarists Colonel Stephen Kearny, Colonel Thomas Kane and Captain John

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Gunnison—plus a host of governors, judges and justices. Admittedly, the five-page list of people in the Francher Party is a ghostly reminder that the toll, though "monumental," could have been much higher.

* * *

Left alone with Wise's account of Mormon history generally and the massacre scene specifically, frail readers might continue to wince after closing the book when they think of Utah, Salt Lake City, and those ill-fated Western travelers. Nevertheless, the story is part of our inherited myth. Because the Francher was one of the richest and best equipped trains to head West, possessing abundant provisions of livestock, gold, guns, and sharpshooters, making it through seemed a California certainty rather than a dream. Intending to cross Kansas Territory to Fort Kearney and reach Salt Lake via the Oregon Trail and then traverse on to Sacramento on the northern California Trail, the Francher Party, encouraged by Mormon advertisements for restoring their animals and purchasing fresh supplies, planned on resting before crossing the Great Basin of what is now Utah and Nevada. By means of travelogues such as Francis Parkman's, Wise attempts to humanize the Francher emigrants by simulating their reactions to the landscape and wildlife, the Rockies and the Continental Divide (a firsthand account or a novel narrated by a "survivor" would work better). Unfortunately, the "new realm, a dangerous private kingdom," as Wise calls it, which the Party entered in crossing the Divide, meant not respite but ambush by a force of 300 Pah-Utes led by Mormon soldier and ruffian John Doyle Lee and plotted indisputably, says Wise, by the criminally fanatic Brigham Young.

Ironically, once in Salt Lake, the Francher Train decided to take the Southern trail to San Bernardino rather than, as originally planned, Sacramento. Wise's evidence attributes the change of route to promises of better food and water at Mountain Meadows, 320 miles south of Salt Lake. As for Young's machinations in recommending the remote spot, Young " . . . let most of the attackers be Indian braves, drawn from tribes loyal to the Church, and let an utterly trustworthy Mormon serve as their leader in the field, after he had assumed the familiar role of 'white Indian' by disguising himself in feathers, blankets and red paint." The same plan had worked in the massacre (1853) of the United States explorer of Western territories, Captain John Gunnison and eight of his men.

After reaching Mountain Meadows and for a time enjoying the lushness of the place, at dawn on September 7, 1857, the Francher Party resisted the first barrage with few casualties, only mistakenly to set up their defenses away from the water supply. One final irony waited to do them in: faced with no water and diminishing ammunition and an attack force swelled by Mormon militiamen from nearby Cedar City, Alexander Francher was decoyed into surrender and consequent slaughter—the militia killing the men, and the Indians (in the tradition of Hannah Dustan) slaying the women and children.

Most of the details come from the confessions of Major John Doyle Lee; we can rely on no "redeemed captive" version here, although there were eighteen or so survivors. In their narrative stances alone *The Redeemed Captive* and *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* are fascinating companions. Both highlight from different points of view the continuing tragedies of victims, assailants, and bystanders (including readers) and the meager consolation involved in attaching guilt and motive to murder—especially when one thinks of more recent massacres, both common and monumental. —*Robert F. Gish*

the iowa review

Spring, 1977 No. 8/2

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Lawrence Sturhahn

POV

Point of view is that position, ethical or emotional, that one assumes observing, or subjected to, an event or an idea. In literature it's the stance an author takes to relate the materials of his tale, so to be omniscient means to know everything about the characters and the events of their process. Imagine the history of the world told by God. But, in descending order, P.O.V. can be more and more limited: imagine the day the exterminator came as related by a mouse. Then too the P.O.V. of an audience may be entirely different from that of the creator-instigator, author/God. Filtered by different motives, unbeknownst to some, all of us look at the world with different eyes.

In film the same rhetorical classifications hold true, but also in film there is what is called a POV shot—when the objective camera stands in for someone's eyes. One of the neat facilities of the medium, it allows for the film maker to suddenly and radically change the audience's point of view. See: a wide shot of a small house surrounded by sylvan trees. A small white truck pulls up and parks, lettered on its side: Angel Exterminators. Cut to: a mouse's POV of a giant in stained coveralls, coming in the front door with his poisons.

* * *

Recently I have seen a number of films which are to be remembered as empty exercises of excellent craft. If story or taste are often questioned, craft—meaning techniques of camera, effects, editing—is something few can fault Hollywood for.

And "Airport '77" is really the story of a submarine, starting in an airplane loaded with sycophants, relatives, and hangers-on to mogul Jimmy Stewart who plays one of those richest-men-in-the-world. Modeled on somebody like the late Howard Hughes, he invented the plane that crashes in the Bermuda Triangle, carrying a good part of the world's fine art (which he owns, too). Loaded aboard for transport to Stewart's private castle and museum (read Hearst's San Simeon, except this one is in Florida), its theft is the ostensible reason for a hi-jacking which goes awry. Imagine an airplane under the sea, as big as (and looking a lot like) a 747, resting intact on the bottom. Out of the ports those aren't clouds, but schools of fish. Then an enormous flotilla of Navy submarine salvage ships, helicopters, and personnel arrive, and work against the time when the aluminum hull will go to pieces under the pressure and drown them all. I don't want to spoil the ending, but given all that Navy cooperation, well. . . .

In the "Domino Principle" a stubborn, violent, and misanthropic Gene Hackman (one of the best actors around, being wasted) is sprung from an un-named prison some place in the United States by an un-named group of superbly organized and omniscient conspirators. In return for this, since he's one of the best with an M-16 rifle, he's to fly over an un-named somebody's house and assassinate whoever it is on his way to his pool for an early morning swim.

Involved in these obscure machinations is our anti-hero's wife, a miscast Candace Bergen (who would probably be better off sticking to her writing and photography) with a strange accent that purports to be—lower class? There is also—as is the convention of these films—a lot of process: getting in and out of automobiles, airplanes, and helicopters, a loving photographic concern with weapons, and the kind of splatter of gore that special effect squibs make when they stand in for bullets striking human flesh.

"Nobody dies—" from where do I recall that line? Was it spoken by some existentialist like Sartre, Godard, or Hemingway? In "Domino Principle" the reverse is true, and the last shot is a POV through a telescopic sight, the cross-hairs on Gene Hackman's heart.

* * *

I made a trip to Hollywood to do some research in December and I talked with Steve Shagan. He's the

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writer of "Save The Tiger" and, most recently, "The Voyage of the Damned" which is a kind of vignetted and unfortunately failed story (he blamed that on the other writer called in to doctor his script) of a shipload of Jews the Nazis shipped from Hamburg to Cuba as a public relations stunt just before the real fighting started in World War II. By indicating how no country would accept them the Germans hoped to indicate what Jews were. The relating of this story, however, was only part of a conversation which turned to philosophic ruminations about American films, the state of *The Business*, and its rhetorics.

"I think that violence is the American family's pornography," Shagan said, "the PG porno movie. Because we can't somehow deal with sensuality, and we're afraid of intimacy. I mean how often do you see anybody kissing where you really believe they're into it, and it's working, and lovely, and poetic? It's what Raymond Chandler said was the kind of look where you knew you fell out of bed with this girl a thousand times, but it was always like the first time you ever saw her—we don't deal with that."

* * *

I can remember going to movies in the afternoons when I was in college, something I haven't done very much in the many years since. And when I came out of the darkness of the theatre and walked on the street I felt displaced. It seemed there was too much light; it took time for the diaphragms in my eyes to adjust. No matter how familiar the stories, the cars, the people, still it was unreal, and some part of me was left to catch up.

Eventually I found out intellectually that the appeal of enormous images playing out exotic drama to the intimacy of an audience sitting in the dark was what motion pictures were all about. Mundane as story and characters might be, their size and their conveyance through images are what's supposed to hook us. And furiously studying various concepts I came to understand that it's a verisimilitude of reality that exists in the motion picture house on the screen. To read something is, finally, abstract; you have to make a thinking transaction. When you watch a movie it just *is* (as well as being an illusion). Yet these films I have been looking at, when I left the theatre I felt exploited. What I witnessed was mostly effect. Technically I may have been impressed; emotionally I was not moved. About these large characters, as excellent actors as Jimmy Stewart, Jack Lemmon, Gene Hackman are, I couldn't have cared less.

Recently, ironically, it has been television that has held me. Not sharing the same emotional appeal because of its small size, and the usual distractions of viewing in the home environment, nevertheless it is visual and thinking about what turned me on has suggested, in my purview, what has turned me off the films. Verisimilitude again.

* * *

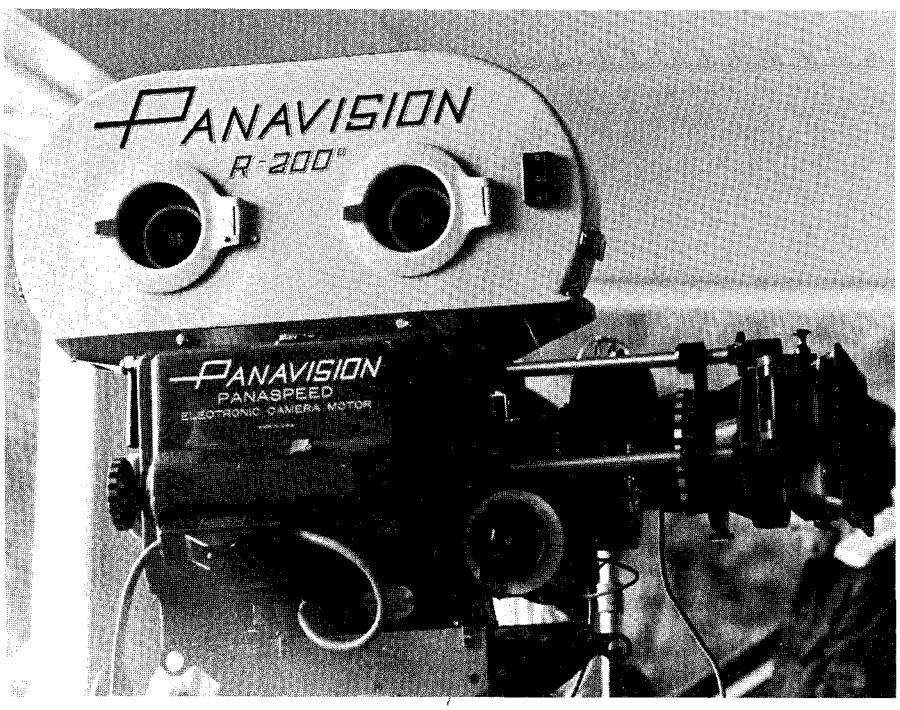
"All the President's Men" (adapted from the Woodward/Bernstein book) is technically excellent with two more fine actors (Hoffman and Redford) in the starring roles, and a host of others, equally good, in supporting roles. Concerning—as who doesn't know—that wrenching frightening time of Watergate when the republic was in definite jeopardy, I am not carping at the film, an example of the good American film. Recently, however, I read John Dean's *Blind Ambition,* another point of view to this period of history. And I am asking how many books, articles, diatribes, defenses, and defamations have been done—and are still to come?

Accepting that history—yesterday or a hundred years ago—is not the distillation of all the points of view towards it (God *or* the mouse), but an accretion of all of them (God *and* the mouse, *and* . . . *and* . . .) the problem with a film like "All the President's Men" is that it becomes for the Americans who go to see it *the* definitive history of the event. And, if some have criticized Woodward and Bernstein for distortion, the adaptation of their book is certainly more distorted yet . . . and what about the people who don't go to movies and don't read, where do they get their P.O.V.? (Recently I was horrified to hear a nineteen-year-old intelligent but execrably educated young woman—my daughter—ask whether it was us who dropped the first atomic bomb?)

* * *

If, as I read in one of the eulogies for "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," it's true that its Saturday night airing changed the American custom of going out to howl (I thought Lawrence Welk did that long ago), then I can understand that because, short of an earthquake or some other holocaust, I don't know what I would let conflict with the airing of "Upstairs Downstairs," which on the local PBS channel comes on Sunday night.

Although not first on the list of appealing qualities to me (it's the characters who are), certainly the idea of a fiction intricately tied to the history of an era (several eras actually) is close to the top. And the show's weave of drama with history is not an accident—of course—but a point of view of its producer, John Hawkesworth. "I'm fascinated with bringing history alive," he said.



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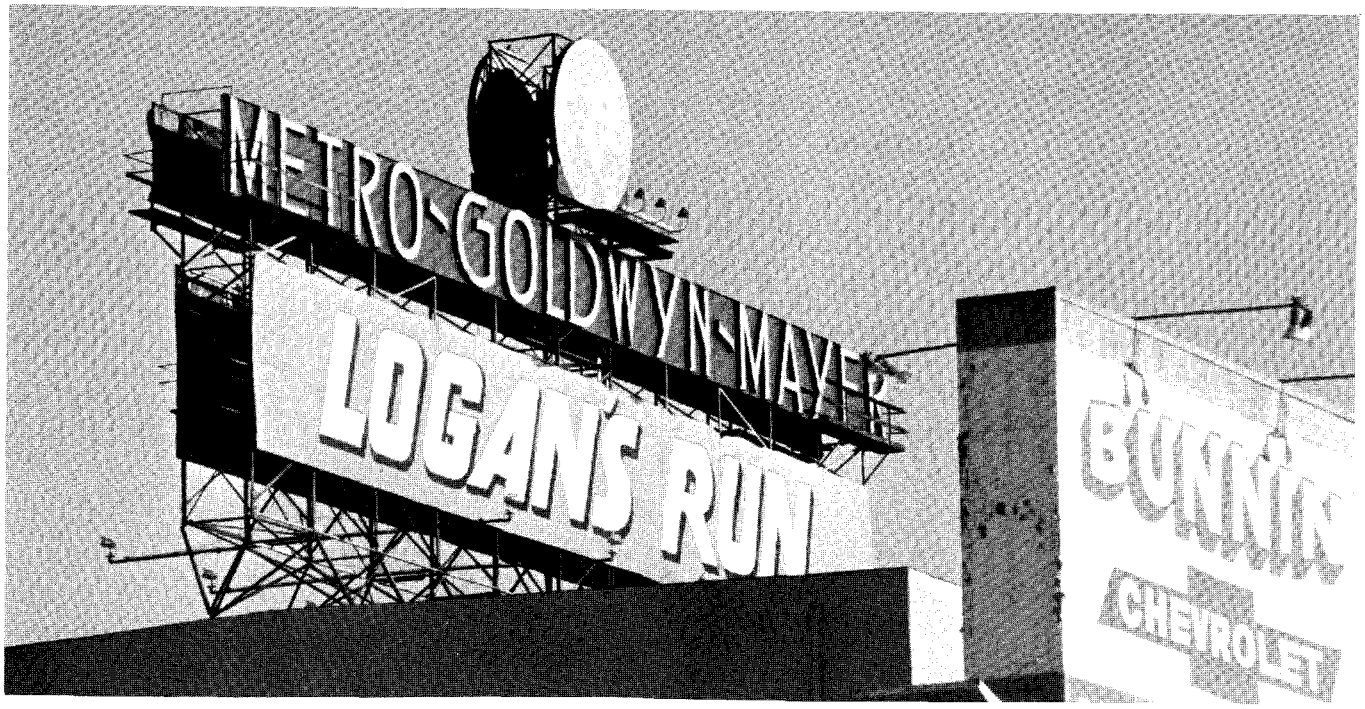
Starting with no idea that it would just go on and on (although unfortunately the current series is the last in this year of the demise for several worthy televisions) what happened with "Upstairs Downstairs," to Hawkesworth's gratification, was, with its popularity and endurance, all kinds of people in England sent letters with anecdotes, photographs, and other historical memorabilia (the detail which made the show so rich), all of which the producer was happy to weave into the scripts.

It is one triumph of that show that from a center of one house on Eaton Place in London (with very minor excursions to other locations) a viewer is presented with a point of view to the formative years of the history of this century, including the horror and waste of World War I. And its greater triumph, and contrast to the emptiness of these cataclysmic American films, are the "Upstairs Downstairs" characters. For it is through them and their multiple points of view that a world becomes visible. Mr. Hudson, head of the house below, and Lord Richard, head of the house above, are both, it seems, absolutely real, representatives of entirely different classes, and ironically, much alike. When Hudson has his heart attack and is confined to bed Lord Richard goes down to visit, and the two of them alternate reading and remembering a Robert Burns poem. What appeals equally to both of them, its romance, is an anachronism from my point of view, and gives me an inkling of both their similarity and difference. Each of them is absolutely certain of his place and his responsibility; both of them are equally blind to the changes that are happening inevitably in the world. But perhaps their certitude is their protection from a maelstrom in which others drown. I can remember my grandmother, who died in her nineties in 1974—a dynamic and interested woman to the



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end—was also surrounded by that same armor of self-righteousness.

* * *

And as, perhaps, it is nostalgia about the concept of the extended family in "Upstairs Downstairs," with all its interlocking, with all its various characters and their detailed and appealing reality, so it is a focus on fragments and alienation in the breakdown of that extended unit in Ingmar Bergman's "Scenes From A Marriage" which presents another P.O.V. to the reality of many modern lives; and that also this winter has been available on public television.

Played against almost rudimentary backgrounds, Liv Ullman and Erland Josephson as exhusband and exwife, are almost always in extreme close-up, and both of them are, as actors, consummate in their craft. As close as the focus is on the personae of the two, there is almost no space for any historical context; they both have parents, new spouses, children, but they are rarely seen. So if one isolates the appeals, examines the fascinations, it is like stripping the leaves from a tree and finding the trunk and branches to be beautiful also; here again it is the characters who hold me.

* * *

Alex Haley's *Roots*, adapted by David Wolper to the twelve hour, eight day marathon on commercial television, costing six million five hundred thousand dollars and taking eight months to shoot, also changed the viewing habits of the country. Building through the week, it achieved on its final night the highest rating ever, eighty million people per average minute of broadcast time, overshadowing finally even the televising of the classic and simplistic and old fashioned romance, "Gone With the Wind."

Tracing the history of Haley's family from Africa where his ancestor, Kunta Kinte, was purportedly taken by slave traders in 1767, the series ended shortly after the Civil War when the reunited family moved to Tennessee where, apparently, Haley's grandmother still lives. Of course there is a promised sequel to carry the tale into the modern era, but on television there are much worse things to look forward to.

Overly concerned with blood and violence, I thought (and which Steve Shagan said is an American rhetoric), certainly biased towards polarities (the white folks are essentially evil, and black folks essentially good), nevertheless, that the viewers became addicted and allowed nothing to interfere on the evenings it was shown, there was reason enough for. And if now some historians chip at detail, others let those carps fall where they may: Haley wrote a novelization and said as much.

The show was enthralling to me and the reason, it appears, lies in the presentation of the characters by superb black actors, and that Haley was able to trace back two hundred years of family history to find out where he came from. How, I asked myself, had this family maintained its continuity and unity through those succeeding generations in their obviously terrible circumstances, when in California and elsewhere I know people who don't know who their grandparents are, much less where they came from. What is a family but the continuance of a name? And slaves were deeded only American given names by masters who bought them off the block.

A psychiatrist named Eric Berne (ironically a Jew who changed his name) invented and/or codified several sequences of ideas, one of which he called Script History. In too simple terms what he proposed was that the individual is what he/she is because the tenets by which he/she lives have been deeded to him/her by his/her parents, as their tenets were deeded by their parents, and so on, ineluctably, into the past. Although this concept has relations to other theories of thought both old and new—Freud and Jung to name two—what Berne was saying, by extension, was that it is possible in hearing the messages in ourselves, finding out the rules by which we live (not that simple a task since much of it is obscure, garbled, and paradoxical), to know how our forebears lived and what their rules and messages were. Ignore for the moment the arcane and sometime mystical, racial memory, the preconscious, the transcendence of souls (and I am not saying that any of these are necessarily false), perhaps it is enough to have an enduring strain, something which underlies all.

And this precept, as I watched "Roots," I suddenly saw being actualized. Haley was able to trace his family back because Kunta Kinte had a message in his family to remember who he was, from where he came, and how important it was to hold on to this and pass it on. It worked against that loss of identity and potency that excising a

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family name could invoke—which may have been the reason the slavers did it.

* * *

I am descended on my father's side from Sephardic Jews who came from Portugal, by way of England and the West Indies, sometime around the beginning of the 19th Century. Carvalho was their name—and among them were some distinguished men: my grandmother's father was a famous graphologist, and his father, a painter and daguerreotypist (with whom I share birthdates), travelled across the United States on Fremont's fifth expedition to California in 1853.

However, when I was growing up I had no inkling that I was Jewish. And although part of the endurance of Jews in the face of almost continual historical prejudice, vilification, and literal genocide, has been the strength of being a community—ghettos, after all, are also enclaves in the midst of hostile forces where individuals can find a measure of safety—sharing a language and other cultural and religious manifestations, nothing was ever said to me. In fact, as I recall, the opposite was true; we were not above being anti-Semitic in the house. Then I remember reading a book called *Out of the Night* (partly a story of Nazi torture of Jews with graphic descriptions) during the '40s, and feeling this pervading fear. But I said to myself to alleviate it: this could never happen to you, you're not Jewish.

Pursuing some internal psychological devils that had come near to destroying me, and finally getting their mark and exorcising them, one subject I felt I had to investigate further was the script history of my family, the fact that although once they had been Jews, now apparently they were not. Also I was very aware that the devils that beleaguered me beleaguered others in the family, and many of them succumbed. So I have pursued the history and what I suspect is this; that with the influx of the masses of immigrant Jews from Middle Europe to the United States in the middle and late 1800s, the Carvalhos, who were descended from royal blood, turned anti-Semitic, and decided to pass. What they did around the turn of this century—and I have not finished the pursuit yet—had terrible consequences for those who came after that time. For a family, a group, a tribe that severs its cultural roots withers up and begins to die. □

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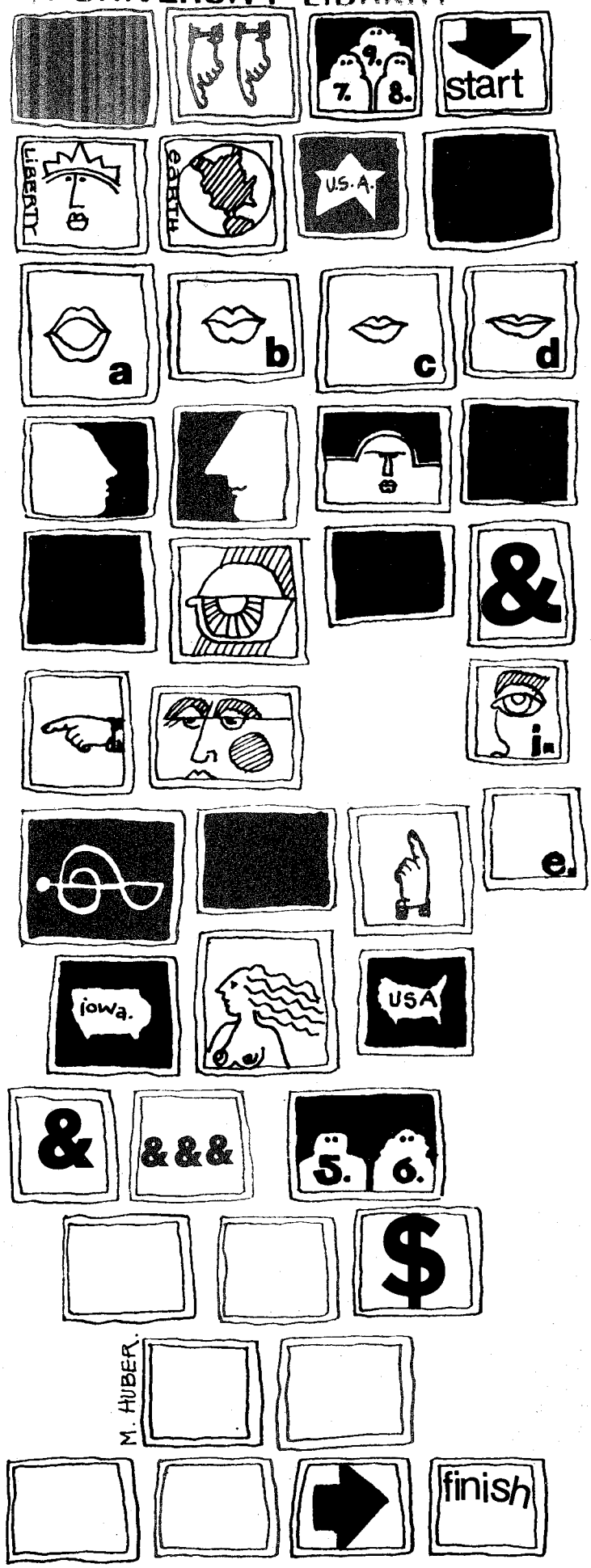

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